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NO. 9 FEB 1999

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Gameers' Republic

COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

• **THE YEAR IN REVIEW!**
THE YEAR'S FINEST REVEALED!

• **AN INTERVIEW WITH SHIGERU MIYAMOTO!**
NINTENDO'S SHINING STAR SPEAKS OUT

• **FIRST DREAMCAST REVIEWS!**
PEN PEN TRICELON, GODZILLA, & VF3TB... PLUS, AN EXCLUSIVE 1ST LOOK AT HOT NEW DC TITLES!

• **FPS AWARDS**
WHO'S KING OF THE CORRIDOR?

SILENT HILL

KONAMI'S DEFINITION OF HORROR

RIDGE RACER 4, CASTLEVANIA 64, HALF-LIFE, HERETIC 2, BLOOD 2, TRIBES
TOMB RAIDER 3, R-TYPE DELTA, THIEF, STARSHOT, INTERSTATE '82, TAI FU

GUARDIAN CRUSADE



VF3-TB



R4



• INTERVIEWS: TODD MCFARLANE, MIYAMOTO, AND KOEI'S WINBACK TEAM!
• IMPORTS, ANIME, NEWS, MUSIC AND MOVIES!

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IT'S TIME YOU

Revolutionary new battlefield physics – Deformable terrain, energy weapon effects, dynamic colored lighting and flying shrapnel – intensifies the realism and excitement.

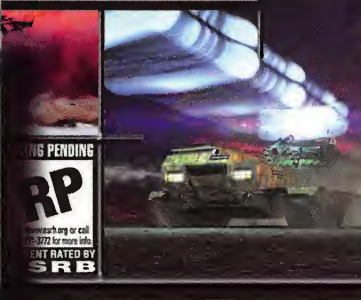
New “veterancy” feature enables units to become smarter, faster and stronger as they become battle hardened with combat experience.

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GR **Game** **Repub** **lic** **MANIFESTO**

This month's cover game marks the next benchmark for the increasingly popular PlayStation horror genre, one that people have embraced perhaps more than any other in recent years. *Silent Hill* is the unnerving story of a man in search of his lost daughter – and what he eventually finds is shocking.

Projecting this game's eminent success while looking back at the incredible success Capcom has had with its *Resident Evil* franchise (and will no doubt continue to have for many years to come), I'm amazed that more publishers haven't followed suit and thrown their hats into the proverbial blood-soaked ring. With creative minds like Clive Barker and Steven King (obvious fits for game adaptations) in our midst, one can only imagine what the next wave of technology could minister with the right developer and such a brilliant storyteller at hand. *Hellraiser* Action/RPG anyone? Beyond *Silent Hill*, there are already three 128-bit fright-fests for fans to begin looking forward to, which should all be available at the Dreamcast's U.S. launch: Kenji Eno's *Dz*, Capcom's *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*, and Sega's *Zombie Zone*. Perhaps these will trigger a genre explosion, and unearth the likes of *Splatterhouse*, another classic primed to emerge from the closet. Horror movies and games alike are a great outlet for one of our most prominent emotions – fear. And while Senator Lieberman may not like it, the old fart can't live forever. I'm sure President Hogan won't mind at all. Enjoy GR issue 9!



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Number of employees who saw Babe 2 by themselves this issue: 1 (and we're very sorry...)

Number of employees who lack the depth to appreciate its undercurrents: 7

Number of publishers who think they should get over it and finish the damn issue: 1 (anyone for bacon?)

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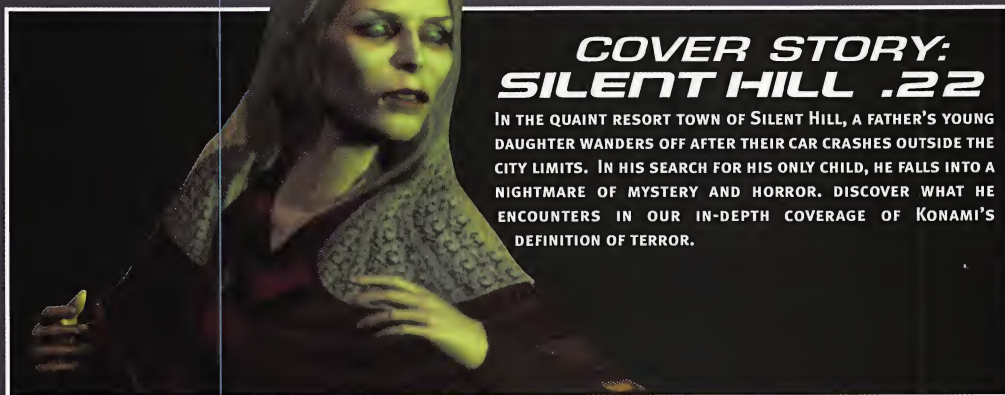
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GR ISSUE NO.*9 GAMERS' REPUBLIC

TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE ➔
A MILLENNIUM PROJECT

COVER STORY: SILENT HILL .22

IN THE QUIANT RESORT TOWN OF SILENT HILL, A FATHER'S YOUNG DAUGHTER WANDERS OFF AFTER THEIR CAR CRASHES OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS. IN HIS SEARCH FOR HIS ONLY CHILD, HE FALLS INTO A NIGHTMARE OF MYSTERY AND HORROR. DISCOVER WHAT HE ENCOUNTERS IN OUR IN-DEPTH COVERAGE OF KONAMI'S DEFINITION OF TERROR.



PEN PEN TRICELON .62

GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT'S *PEN PEN* BRINGS SUPER-WACKY RACING TO DREAMCAST. WITH ITS HIGH-RES GRAPHICS AND FOUR-PLAYER MODE, FIND OUT IF THIS LAUNCH TITLE DELIVERS THE GAMEPLAY GOODS, OR IF IT'S JUST ANOTHER (VERY) PRETTY FACE.

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REPUBLIC



R4: RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 .36

RIDGE RACER FANS, LOOK SHARP. NAMCO IS SET TO UNLEASH THE BIGGEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL RIDGE RACER YET. CHECK OUT OUR PREVIEW OF R4 AND THE NEW JOGCON CONTROLLER.

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*designed by the italians.
no wonder it's attracted
to anything with curves.*



05...04...03...02...01



"R4 has to be the best-looking PlayStation racer ever (yes, edging out even Gran Turismo)."

- Official PlayStation Magazine, December 1998



It is speed incarnate. Its sexy sheet metal restrains a 3000 cc power plant that hits 0-190 mph in the snap of a linguini. It is the Bisonte - just one of the automotive marvels that scorch the streets in R4. With over 300 new cars, 45 fantastic models, 8 thrilling courses, a 2-player split-screen mode and only one way to drive. Fast. R4's asphalt gulping graphics and spectacular racing environments deliver racing speeds that were once deemed impossible. But not anymore. Now you've got R4. Ciao, baby.

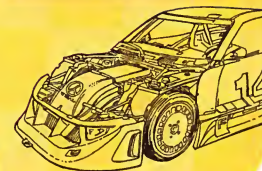
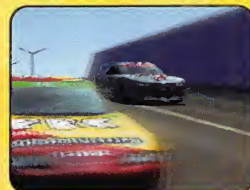


Think fast. Drive faster.

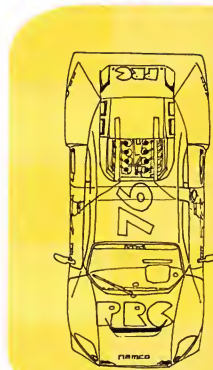
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- Sensational graphics and lighting effects give every race a cinematic feel
- Race at all times of day and night, even during dramatic sunsets
- Relive your greatest moments through the dynamic-camera replay mode
- Watch your race with all-new motion-blur effects



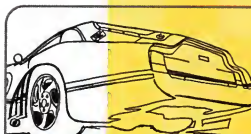
- Battle head-to-head in split-screen vs. mode



- Speed-tuned physics keep the arcade-style action fast-paced
- Championship performances unlock secret hidden supercars
- Don't be afraid to bump the other car, it's all part of a winning strategy
- Join one of four international race teams - each with individual strengths and weaknesses
- Design original logos to customize your car



- Race on gorgeous cityscape, countryside and racetrack courses



- Money can't buy victory. You've got to earn new cars with your race performance
- Experience all the ups and downs of a full racing season in the Grand Prix mode
- Includes a Ridge Racer Turbo Mode bonus disc with a 60 FPS track



frontlines

CONTENT CREATION + NICOGRAPH '98



Content Creation
+
NICOGRAPH 98



Despite being overshadowed by the Dreamcast launch, a three-day convention promoting the creation and use of computer graphics was held at the Makuhari Messe starting on Nov. 25. The 180+ exhibitors displayed a wide variety of software and hardware, but the emphasis was on motion capture systems and CG authoring systems for movies and games.



● Square's booth was one of the biggest, with a huge movie-like theater inside. Throughout the day Square showed a collection of FMV clips from *FFVIII*, including a never-before-seen version of a dance sequence between Squall and Rinda and the full version of the fight between Squall and Seifer. They also showed a small clip of the *FF* movie with a close-up of an old man's face to highlight the incredible detail of the skin texture and eye. It looked so convincing you might have thought it was a real person. ●





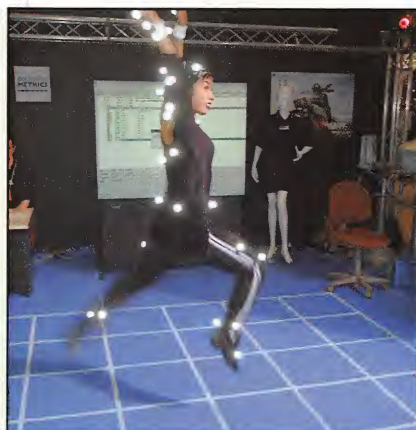
● On Namco's stand, top motion-capture experts held seminars on the technology they used to create *Soul Calibur* and *Tekken 3*. Mr. Takayasu Yanagihara (head of motion development) demonstrated their system live on stage with the help of digital actor, Mr. Kenichiro Tamayori. A special version of *Soul Calibur* showed how characters created using the original unmodified motion capture data differ from the characters in the final version.



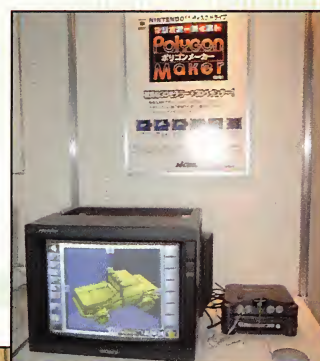
● One of the big surprises was a Dreamcast development kit running *D2* from Warp. A CG model of Laura could be edited on a Compaq PC and then a special unit (secretly hidden under a black box) utilizing a Dreamcast controller could be used to manipulate her. Next to this was a video running new sequences of *D2*.



● The most impressive motion capture system being demonstrated was the Vicon. With an array of sensors around the stage, a lady's dance was captured and displayed onscreen in just a few minutes. The same system was also employed for Bandai's *Masked Rider*, which had some of the smoothest and realistic motion-captured fighting yet for a PlayStation game.



● Another shock appearance was Nintendo's *Polygon Maker*. Finished long ago, this fully working version was up and running on the 64DD with skilled designers demonstrating its capabilities. More than that, you could have a go yourself as well. Although not likely to challenge any professional CG software, this is still a powerful tool to play with at home for fun. ▲



BERKLEY, NO; SHENMUE, GO!

The preview disk of *Shenmue* (formerly *Project Berkley*) included with VT3tb revealed little...

...about Sega's eagerly anticipated Dreamcast game. It includes a short video of Yu Suzuki explaining the concept behind *Shenmue* and his FREE system, but none of the images are in-game shots.



This now leaves us waiting until Dec. 20, when Sega will hold a special presentation of *Shenmue* for the public at the Yokohama Pacifico near Tokyo. Those who attend the event will receive exclusive *Shenmue* gifts and be able to see Mr. Kunihiro Fujioka (Segata Sanshirou) and Yukawa Senmu (from the Dreamcast commercials).

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SING A SONG OF SEGA

On November 25, the official Dreamcast campaign song, sung by Sega's very own Mr. Yukawa, went on sale in Japan. As well as listening to the upbeat tunes and often amusing lyrics, you could also get the official Yukawa telephone strap, which was received when you pre-ordered a Dreamcast.



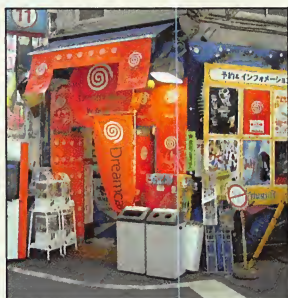
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WELCOME DREAMCAST!

The moment the gaming world had been waiting for finally came on November 27, 1998, as...

...gamers from all around the world made the pilgrimage to Japan's electronic centers and bought Dreamcasts by the thousands. This was a day that will not be forgotten for a very long time.

GR received a large shipment of DCs, peripherals and games not long after the event (no thanks to customs), and were soon enjoying the machine in all its glory. Sega are onto a winner, and gamers everywhere should be totally pumped. Hello and welcome, Mr. Dreamcast!



SIGHT & SOUND FOR DREAMCAST

Sega's subsidiary partner CRI has released two important tools to the DC development community...

One is MPEG software, the CRI *MPEG Softdec*, which will maximize MPEG (FMV) playback for DC. *MPEG Softdec* can compress movies to 1/50th of their original size with less than 50 percent burden to the CPU! This means it's possible to store a two-hour movie on a single disc, display it clearer than VHS, and show it full-screen. Suggested uses for the remaining CPU power includes cross-streaming footage, or high-res, real-time characters/objects displayed during video playback.

The other tool is an updated version of CRI's ADX sound compression technology. ADX for Dreamcast will enable simultaneous playback of six sound channels at 44.1 kHz (CD quality).

ENGAGE SEAMAN IN CONVERSATION

Developer Vivarium is planning to release its first software title for Dreamcast...

...called *Seaman*. The game will utilize a new peripheral, tentatively called the Micdevice, which will also function as voice recognition apparatus for DC. The player talks to a creature called *Seaman*, an artificial living organism, using the Micdevice's microphone. Based on how you talk to him and data that you input, *Seaman* learns and can talk back to you. This has the potential to be the next big thing. Check out the *Pikachu* voice module for more evidence.

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DREAMCAST DELAYS

Even more delayed Dreamcast games have been reluctantly announced recently in Japan. First up is Sting's RPG, *Evolution*, and *Blue Stinger* from Climax. Next under the hammer is *Climax Landers* and more surprisingly after that is *Bio-Hazard: Code Veronica*. Apparently, Capcom doesn't want to release *BHCV* until at least 2 million DC units have been sold. So the list of release dates now looks like this:

Evolution: January 21, 1999
Blue Stinger: mid-March, 1999
Climax Landers: February 25, 1999
Bio-Hazard: Code Veronica: Christmas 1999



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WHEN
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REACHES
THE MOON...



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GOOD DESIGN IN MY POCKET

Neo Geo Pocket, released on October 28, received a 1998 Good Design Award. The award, given by...

...Japan Industrial Design Association, is always bestowed upon superbly designed commodities. Recognized in the Award in Sports Leisure category for its Neo Geo Pocket, SNK have stated that they're very honored to receive the award and pleased that the design of the game machine has been praised. Enjoy the picture of the newest Neo Geo Pocket (named the Crystal White), and see for yourself why its design is an outright winner.

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LISTEN UP, PIKACHU

We've had controllers, joysticks and key-boards for years, but this Christmas...



...we'll have the first hands-free game when Nintendo release the Nintendo 64 Voice Recognition System with *Pikachu Genki Dechu*. Based

on the popular *Pocket Monster* series, you communicate with the cute Pikachu via the microphone. This is the first game to have benefited from funds provided by Marigul, a special company set up by Nintendo and Recruit to help new developers.

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ARCADE ACTION UNVEILED

On November 25, Sega held a private show for their latest arcade games. AM3 had two new Model 3 games...

...LA Machine Guns and *Magical Truck Adventure* (which even Sega president, Mr. Irimajiri, had a go on!). AM 1's Naomi lineup consisted of a 100 percent complete *HOTD 2*, now in Japanese arcades, and a 35 percent complete *Zombie Zone* (previously *Blood Bullet*) coming next year. Full details next month!

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SORRY!

Apologies to Taito for failing to note that the screen shots of *Psychic Force 2012* in Issue 8 were all from the arcade version.



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BLOODY SORRY!

A big apology to Eighting/Raizing for spelling their name wrong in Issue 7 and using the wrong copyright message for *Bloody Roar 2*.

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CONGRATS, MIYAMOTO!

Shigeru Miyamoto was awarded Chairman Prize at the 13th annual Multimedia Grand Prix Award, held on November 17 in Tokyo. The award recognizes outstanding multimedia content and gives encouragement to multimedia creators. While showing a *Zelda 64* demo, Mr. Miyamoto looked to have great confidence in his masterwork, which took him three-and-a-half years to create. Well deserved, as we're sure you'll agree.

SAYONARA...SOMEDAY

According to the Nikkei Shinbun, Nintendo Company Limited's president Hiroshi Yamauchi...

...will officially resign his post by 2001. He has been Nintendo's president since 1949 (when Nintendo made playing cards), taking over from his late grandfather with the understanding that he would be the only Yamauchi in the company and that he would have complete authority. Feared greatly within the company, he often pit internal teams against one another to promote competition, a most un-Japanese practice. Recently, he grabbed headlines for claiming that

the N64 was less successful in its homeland than Sony's PS because Japanese gamers "[like] to be alone in their rooms and play depressing games." Currently, Mr. Yamauchi plans to oversee the management of NCL through the year 2000, during which time Nintendo will be relocating headquarters. No successor has been announced.

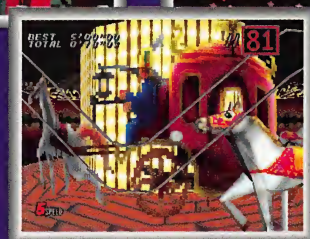
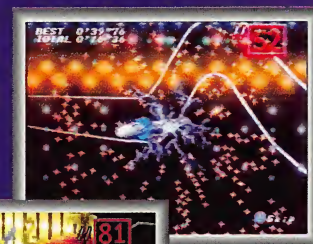
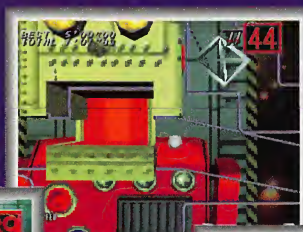
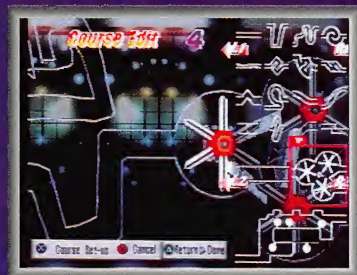
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an interview with todd mcfarlane

GR had the privilege of speaking with Todd McFarlane, creator of *Spawn*, about his toys, his life, and more! Read on...

Tell us briefly how all of this started.

I left Marvel Comics in the fall of '91, we started Image Comics in January 1992. The first *Spawn* comic book came out that June and hit the top of the charts. Then people came out of the woodwork to find some way to piggyback on the success of the book,

including toy companies, who wanted to acquire the rights to the characters for toys. So I had tea and crumpets with all the major players, but, in the end, none of them could promise me a good toy. In hindsight, I can understand that as a big corporation spending millions of dollars on a product, you can't give some nutcase artist the ability to pull the plug at the last minute, but... Once I went through the whole gambit, the last guys said, "Well, if you don't take our offer, you're never going to see toys." So I said, "I guess I'm going to have to go into business, become your enemy on the market, and take market share away." And that's how I exact revenge against my new-found enemy.

So you started McFarlane Toys out of necessity, in order to bring your product ideas to life?

Essentially, yes. Toys like I wanted to make were hard to find, and were real hit-or-miss. I knew my toys would be a cut above, so I had no choice but to do the exact same thing as I did with the comic book. People said that an artist can't start a comic company or a toy company, but why not? It's just about money and creativity and manufacturing. I mean, business is not a secret, it's not magic; it's about having good people and a good idea and selling it at a fair price.

So this came out of wanting to make my own *Spawn* toys, and being a prudent manager, I knew I shouldn't put all my eggs in one basket. We've done more and

more in-house stuff away from *Spawn*, and then we started to take outside licenses, to see if we can't maybe grow some of our core audience, or at least go after products that might be deemed kind of cool.

Does this "cool factor" play a role in determining which outside licenses you'll go after?

It's not necessarily just the "cool factor," you could use that as part of the definition, but it's more the attitude. That's part of my company slogan, that it's an attitude, but things fall into that same attitude. Again, some people can't quite see it. They'll say, "How is this property like *that* property?" They can't be all the same, because that'd become boring. If you talk to a *Kiss* fan, they're hard-core, or if you talk to an *X-Files* fan, they're hard-core; even a fanatic *Spawn* fan, they're right into it. We've just picked up *Austin Powers*, which is a very quirky license, but because the humor in it is kind of laughing at itself at a lot of levels, that fits in.

For the toy properties that aren't yours, how difficult has it been to obtain those rights? Take *Movie Maniacs*, for example. Were the negotiations difficult to get the rights to do those figures?

Those are actually kind of odd ones, because that's a line where if you do six toys, it involves six different contracts. For *Kiss*, *X-Files*, or *Metal Gear Solid*, with one contract you've got access to multiple characters. That wasn't necessarily true here, but the complexity was that it's a little more time consuming tracking down everybody that owns the rights and making the specific deal, and making sure you get the right creative input from the different companies. Some people are a little bit easier to work with than others, and so you just have to kind of roll with the punches. Next year we'll bring out *Movie Maniacs II*, which I believe are actually a stronger line.

Do you have the opinion, like many of us do, that since you've come into the toy business, you've raised the bar for quality and brought the other toy companies up with you?

Yeah, I would say so. I think that some of the kudos that are given to me are somewhat overstated, but I believe I have had some influence, and I don't think anybody can deny me that. I've shown that you can give attitude and poses to your figures a little more than in the past, and that you can sculpt with more detail, which doesn't come at any extra cost to the company. Then the only extra cost is evident in some of the stuff that I do. I mean, if you have a hundred different places you're going to paint, that adds to the cost, so some other companies might not do that. We do a lot of toys that are all dirty by the time we're done with them, since we use a lot of splatters and washes and things like that. We're

trying to convey more of a model-kit quality, rather than a shiny plastic toy. It took a little time for my manufacturers to get over that—that awed response of, "You want us to make a brand new toy and dirty it up?" And I say, "Yep. That's what I want to do."

"We can't do that!"
"And we won't get fired?" No! I want the toys to look like—most of them, at least, since we're dealing with monsters—to look like you found them on the bottom of your shoe and they've been there for awhile. When I did comic books, I always hated monsters that looked like they just got out of the shower. No, these guys have been living out in the jungle for, like, three years; they should look sort of mangy. Or if somebody's been in a war, they should look like not the beginning of the war, but the end of the war. I needed to give more of a statuesque quality to the figure for when it was just sitting on a shelf. Because I've been somewhat successful, the other companies are realizing, "Hey! You can put extra bullets on the pack; you can actually sculpt more than one rivet on a guy's arm!" You can actually do a hundred of them, which doesn't cost any more money; it's just that somebody has to think about it.

We've seen the new *Metal Gear Solid* figures; those are amazing looking!

The MGS figures present a whole different set of problems. Since we're dealing with an outsourced license, our amount of freedom goes down to a certain extent. I believe that some of the best toys that my company's made are the ones where there is no prior blueprint, like those toys that just came out, the *Dark Ages Spawn*—it's just stuff. Did it pre-exist in a comic book? No. Are they cool-looking toys? I believe so. But with the MGS, you have to ask, who should we make? What kind of attitude should we give them? What kind of accessories can we dress them up with? Since we were going from digital to three-dimensional, do we stay true to the look of the original on the computer screen or do we try to make them a little more human-looking? That's been the conversation that's been going between us and Konami: what liberties can we take and what can't we? They have been lenient on some things and that impresses me, because I believe it's better for the product. Now we've got a whole line of these toys, and the video game is a big deal, so now we'll see if anybody wants a three-dimensional piece of plastic.

Are you planning on doing any more video game toys in the future, or are you leaving that open?

Well, I don't really know how solid of a base that market is. The MGS figures are a bit of an experiment, especially given that they'll hit the shelves after Christmas. It'll be interesting to see what the fallout is, and if it's a viable outlet, then, like my monsters or music figures, I'll get a little more aggressive in that field.

continued on page 102



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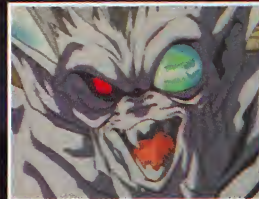
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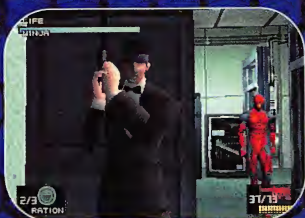
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YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATS



top ten best selling playstation titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD OCTOBER 1998



- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 METAL GEAR SOLID KONAMI | 6 NASCAR '99 EA |
| 2 MADDEN '99 EA | 7 WWF WARZONE ACCLAIM |
| 3 NFL BLITZ MIDWAY | 8 PARASITE EVE SQUARESOFT |
| 4 TENCHU ACTIVISION | 9 CRASH BANDICOOT SONY |
| 5 NFL GAMEDAY '99 989 STUDIOS | 10 SPYRO THE DRAGON SONY |

As expected, MGS begins what will surely be many month's of chart-busting sales... Link may have something to say about that next issue!

top ten best selling nintendos64 titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD OCTOBER 1998

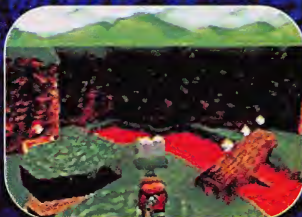
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|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 WCW/NWO REVENGE THQ | 6 BANJO-KAZOOIE NINTENDO |
| 2 GOLDENEYE 007 NINTENDO | 7 WWF WARZONE ACCLAIM |
| 3 NFL BLITZ MIDWAY | 8 NASCAR '99 EA |
| 4 MADDEN NFL EA | 9 MARIO KART 64 NINTENDO |
| 5 CRUIS'N THE WORLD NINTENDO | 10 SUPER MARIO 64 NINTENDO |

Millions of future Hulk Hogan voters have spoken as wrestling dominates once again. Check Mario out still hangin' at number 10!



top ten best selling saturn titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD OCTOBER 1998



- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 CROC: LEGEND OF GOBBOS FOX | 6 NHL '97 EA |
| 2 PANZER DRAGON SAGA SEGA | 7 MADDEN NFL '98 EA |
| 3 TOMB RAIDER EIDOS | 8 NBA LIVE '98 EA |
| 4 NASCAR '98 EA | 9 SONIC 3D BLAST SEGA |
| 5 SHINING FORCE 3 SEGA | 10 MADDEN '97 EA |

A repeat for Croc! Beating out Panzer Dragoon Saga nonetheless! Rayearth is coming... Enjoy it before it all goes in the shape of a pear.

top ten best selling pc titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD OCTOBER 1998

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 DEER HUNTER 2 WIZARDWORKS | 6 DEER HUNTER WIZARDWORKS |
| 2 NEED FOR SPEED III EA | 7 JOHN MADDEN '99 EA |
| 3 CABELA'S B.G.H. HEAD GAMES | 8 CAESAR 3 SIERRA ON-LINE |
| 4 RAINBOW SIX RED STORM | 9 R.M. TROPHY HUNTER WW |
| 5 STARCRAFT BLIZZARD STUDIOS | 10 AXIS & ALLIES HASBRO |

It's a sad day for true gamers and pixelly deer everywhere. The long-dreaded sequel is here, ready to dominate the charts - Deer Hunter 2. Be afraid.



top ten overall console

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD OCTOBER 1998



- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 METAL GEAR SOLID-ps KONAMI | 6 TENCHU-ps ACTIVISION |
| 2 WCW/NWO REVENGE-n64 THQ | 7 NFL GAMEDAY '99-ps 989 STUDIOS |
| 3 GOLDENEYE 007-n64 NINTENDO | 8 NFL BLITZ-ps MIDWAY |
| 4 MADDEN '99-ps EA | 9 NASCAR '99-ps EA |
| 5 NFL BLITZ-ps MIDWAY | 10 WWF WARZONE-ps ACCLAIM |

world republic top ten games



japan



- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT N64 | 6 THE LEGEND OF LEGAIA PS |
| 2 DRAGON QUEST MONSTERS GB | 7 WORLD SOCCER JIKKYOU PS |
| 3 FAMOUS DETECTIVE CONAN PS | 8 POKEMON PIKACHU GB |
| 4 1500 SERIES MAHJONG PS | 9 SHE'SN SS |
| 5 SMASH COURT 2 PS | 10 BEAT MANIA PS |

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 7, 1998

united kingdom



- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 TOMB RAIDER 3 PS | 6 TOCA 2 PS |
| 2 FIFA '99 PS/PC | 7 TOCA PS |
| 3 SPYRO THE DRAGON PS | 8 SMALL SOLDIERS PS |
| 4 TEKKEN 3 PS | 9 ABE'S EXODDUS PS |
| 5 FORMULA 1 '98 PS | 10 GRAND THEFT AUTO PS |

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 7, 1998

gamers' republic top ten games

BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH DECEMBER 7



d. halverson



- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 2 CASTLEVANIA 64 | N64 |
| 3 PEN PEN TRIICELON | DC |
| 4 TONIC TROUBLE | N64 |
| 5 ROGUE SQUADRON | N64 |
| 6 GODZILLA GENERATIONS | DC |
| 7 MEDIEVIL | PS |
| 8 BUCK BUMBLE | N64 |
| 9 GRIM FANDANGO | PC |
| 10 BODY HARVEST | N64 |



b. williams



- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 2 PEN PEN TRIICELON | DC |
| 3 VF3tb | DC |
| 4 WARIO LAND 2 | GBC |
| 5 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 | PS |
| 6 METAL GEAR SOLID | PS |
| 7 POKEMON (BLUE) | GBC |
| 8 TETRIS DX | GBC |
| 9 XENOGears | PS |
| 10 BRAVE FENCER | PS |



b. siechter



- | | |
|----------------------|------|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 2 SILENT HILL | PS |
| 3 TOMB RAIDER 3 | PS |
| 4 ABE'S EXODDUS | PS |
| 5 MEDIEVIL | PS |
| 6 VF3tb | DC |
| 7 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 | PS |
| 8 PEN PEN TRIICELON | DC |
| 9 CASTLEVANIA: SOIN | PS |
| 10 CASTLEVANIA 64 | SNES |



d. rees



- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 2 METAL GEAR SOLID | PS |
| 3 HALF-LIFE | PC |
| 4 VF3tb | DC |
| 5 HERETIC 2 | PC |
| 6 MYTH 2 | PC |
| 7 SIN | PC |
| 8 BLOOD 2 | PC |
| 9 FALLOUT 2 | PC |
| 10 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 | PS |



m. hobbs



- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 2 VF3tb | DC |
| 3 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 | PS |
| 4 PEN PEN TRIICELON | DC |
| 5 R-TYPE DELTA | PS |
| 6 WARIO LAND 2 | GBC |
| 7 PUYO PUYO SUN | GBC |
| 8 60 fps RIDGE RACER | PS |
| 9 POKEMON RED | GB |
| 10 ROGUE SQUADRON | N64 |



m. griffin



- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 2 VF3tb | DC |
| 3 METAL GEAR SOLID | GEN |
| 4 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 | PC |
| 5 R-TYPE DELTA | PS |
| 6 PEN PEN TRIICELON | DC |
| 7 THE LEGAIA | PS |
| 8 DESTREGA | PS |
| 9 VIGILANTE 8 | N64 |
| 10 SPEED BUSTERS | PC |



r. lockhart



- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 2 HALF-LIFE | PC |
| 3 GRIM FANDANGO | PC |
| 4 VF3tb | DC |
| 5 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 | PS |
| 6 PEN PEN TRIICELON | DC |
| 7 BLOOD 2 | PC |
| 8 RADIANT SILVERGUN | SS |
| 9 SIN | PC |
| 10 MYTH 2 | PC |



d. hodgson



- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1 VF3tb | DC |
| 2 SILENT HILL | PS |
| 3 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 | PS |
| 4 HALF-LIFE | PC |
| 5 ZELDA: OOT | N64 |
| 6 SIN | PC |
| 7 PEN PEN TRIICELON | DC |
| 8 HERETIC II | PC |
| 9 METAL GEAR SOLID | PS |
| 10 CASTLEVANIA | N64 |

RAM, or Random Access Memory, is what a computer or console uses to store all the data that it needs on short notice. For a game, this typically includes the actual code being run, state data—such as where all the characters are—graphics and sound data, and other fundamental information, such as the layout of the current level. Of these, graphics is typically the largest category of information, so you tend to see RAM limitations having the most effect on the level of detail of graphics in a game at any given time. However, dealing with RAM limitations is very different on different platforms, and, in particular, where different storage media are concerned. PCs can store tremendous amounts of information on hard disk, at access rates which are substantially slower than RAM, but still much faster than a CD. Cartridge access times are also slower than RAM but faster than a CD, but have the major difference that it is only possible to read from them, and not to write to them. Finally, CDs are much slower than any of the other storage media, and also can't be written to (but of course have the advantage that they store twenty times more than even the largest cartridges, and are very cheap to produce).

domestic market), Nintendo released a 4MB RAM Pak for the N64. The ways in which developers have used it are in some ways subtler, since the Nintendo can actually read data off cartridges without pausing to load, and is therefore not committed to reading off the graphics for entire areas into RAM at once. For instance, *Iguana's Quarterback Club '99* reads certain animation information off the cartridge only as necessary, drastically reducing the amount of animations needed in RAM at any given time. Despite this versatility, *Quarterback Club '99* is actually one of the first games to use the RAM Pak, although it was late enough in the development cycle when the RAM Pak was announced that the changes are simply the ones they could implement without any serious redesigning or creation of new art. Probably the most notable of these (and the most illustrative of the importance of the genre for which RAM is used) is that the replay buffer is substantially longer, so that a lot more action can be viewed on replay than would be possible without the cart. The other changes mainly involve keeping more animation and code in RAM at any given time, which

mations with flash bulbs.

Turok 2 and *Rogue Squadron*, having been more thoroughly designed with the RAM cart in mind, make substantially better use of it. The most spectacular difference is that with the RAM cart, they can run in high resolution. This is largely due to the fact that when running in double-buffered high-resolution with a z-buffer, nearly half of the Nintendo's 4MB of RAM is already used up as video memory, leaving only about two MB for little details like code, textures, animations, level structure, and so forth. (Digression: double-buffering is when you store the current screen in memory while drawing the new one in a different place, so that a half-drawn screen is never shown.) The additional 4 megabytes of RAM therefore triples the amount of memory available for all of this when running in high resolution. While a football game can get away with the smaller amount of RAM, due to a combination of less texture and model data (a football field doesn't have anything like the complexity of a level of *Turok*) and creative selectiveness in reading data off the cartridge as needed, a first-person shooter would be

RAM PAK 64

By Brian Osseman

Since it's often not really plausible to read data off a CD as it's needed (for instance, to get move animations in a fighting game), additional RAM for CD-based systems like the Saturn generally has a very predictable effect: it's used mainly to allow more graphics to be read off the CD at a time, so that given areas can have more detail. The recent Saturn Capcom fighting games *X-Men vs. Street Fighter*, *Vampire Savior*, and *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter* (all restricted to import buyers, unfortunately) are excellent examples: they all use the 4MB RAM cart to include a huge amount of additional animations, allowing the Saturn versions of the two "versus" games to include the tag-team aspect without any loading times when switching characters. The 4MB cart may also be used to include more and better sound effects.

More recently (and more relevant to the



Being one of the first games to utilize the N64's 4MB RAM Pak, *Rogue Squadron* is clearly an excellent showcase title to demonstrate the difference that the extra memory can make to the appearance of a game. Without the RAM Pak (right), the game's ship and ground objects are more chunky (not to mention there's extra fog); with it, the engine comes close to achieving first-generation PC 3DFX standards.

doesn't have much visible impact most of the time, but can help manage particularly complicated situations to minimize slowdown. Iguana states that in future releases of *Quarterback Club*, the RAM Pak will also be used to add more detail overall, particularly in atmospheric aspects like crowd ani-

ceedingly hard pressed to run in high resolution without the additional RAM.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR SUGGESTIONS FOR TOPICS YOU'D LIKE TO SEE COVERED, PLEASE E-MAIL: TECHFRONT@GAMERSREPUBLIC.COM.

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In a horribly weathered, blood-stained room of a deserted elementary school, two emaciated figures are pinned against the wall, their necks and feet firmly caught in a web of barbed wire that forms a rough lattice on both sides of a rusted door. There is a puzzle contained within this door, and solving it soon leads Harry Mason, the game's protagonist, up to a disheveled second-floor classroom. Here, on a lone desk in the corner of the room, rings a telephone, and when Harry picks up the receiver, a frightened voice quivers, "Daddy... Help me, daddy. Where are you?"

The person eerily whispering these words is a young girl named Cheryl, the daughter of Harry who, after disappearing from the scene of a car crash, has been lost in the mysterious town of Silent Hill. Strengthened by the wave of gruesome images that have lead up to these early events, her cries for help are chilling. And yet this is only the beginning of the macabre trail that winds through *Silent Hill* – a dark, grisly, highly brooding title that takes the craft of game making to a higher order.

The city of Silent Hill is one of the most distinctive and atmospheric places that's been created in a video game. Shrouded in an impenetrable darkness, the crumbling town is like a twisted nightmare that has been given solid image in which we are invited to explore. Uncommonly graphic and creepy, the game is uncompromising in its portrayal of the disturbing events plaguing the town. Bits and pieces of the story are strung together as Harry meets the few ambiguous individuals who are left wandering the deserted Silent Hill, and only at the end of his search are answers to its bizarre mysteries revealed.

SILENT

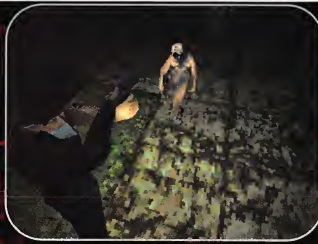
Silent Hill

BY BRADY FIECHTER

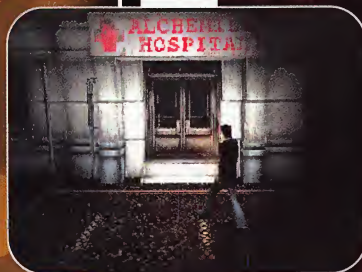




Every town has its secrets. Some are just darker than others



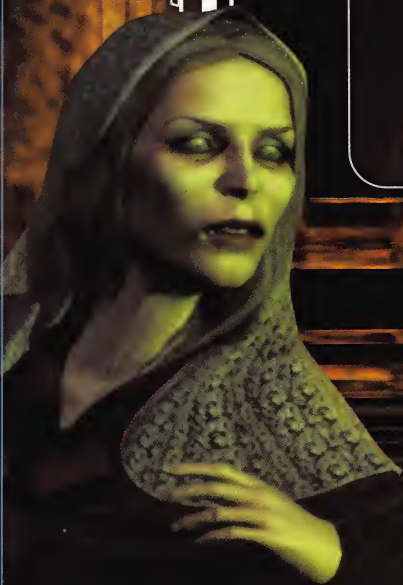
HILL



With its extraordinary atmospheric appeal, the look of *Silent Hill* is crucial to its effect. The pervasive gloom is only temporarily chipped away by the piercing beam of Harry's flashlight, which casts a pale, hopeless pool of light that is always struggling to reach the other side of a room. The field of vision is extremely limited, whether from a thick, lingering fog or the pitch-blackness that creeps over the bizarre alternate state Harry is constantly being hurled into. This is an exceptionally dark game – not only in theme but, just as affecting, in the literal absence of light. By dropping the illumination levels to extreme lows and lighting only key areas on the screen, leaving everything else in the shadows, the designers have constructed a level of tension around the game that is unparalleled.

Moments of disquietude refuse to back off when increasing packs of vile creatures begin plodding from the darkness. The origin of these aberrant beings and their means of existence are, like so much of what transpires in the game, one of the many twisted mysteries. And, of course, finding the answers can come only after a string of bloody confrontations. Harry is no expert when it comes to disposing of diseased freaks, and with little skill in the use of firearms, a simple pistol is almost always the only weapon of offense. A butcher knife, shotgun or iron pipe may prove useful at times, but such items are limited in their use. When force is not an option, the wisest course of action is simply to run, which more often than not will result in the quickest and safest passage.

There are certainly ample action scenes in which to satisfy the craving for violent confrontation, but *Silent Hill* has the sense to dig deeper than stock run-and-shoot gameplay. While the occasional boss creature will impede Harry's path and more than enough enemies pollute the streets and buildings in the town, puzzles and exploration bring a much greater strength to the game. Occasionally cerebral but always interesting, the tasks that must be performed to open the many locked doors strive to go beyond flipping switches and picking up keys, offering the entertaining riddles many games today refuse to touch. An example of one of the more creative puzzles begins with the discovery of a piano with bloody fingerprints on the keys. Posted above a





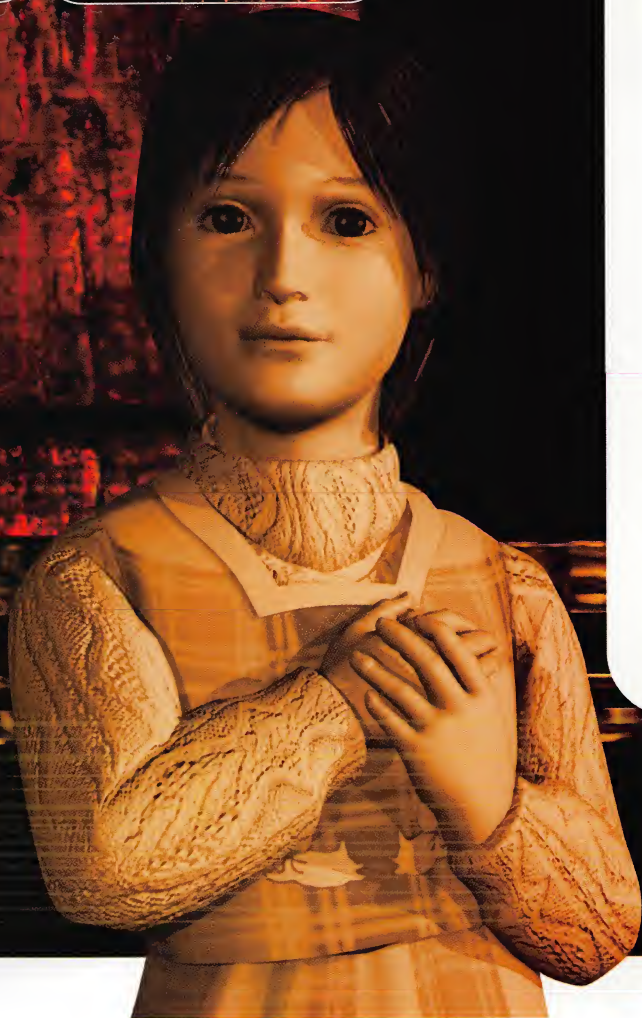
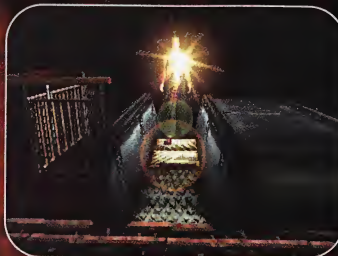
S H

chalkboard on the classroom wall, a poster contains the tablature and words to a song that must be cleverly translated to the piano, the notes of which provide a piece to complete yet another task. After more than enough heart-pounding eluding and blood spilling, this gives us a chance to pull back and channel our focus down a different path.

For all that *Silent Hill* strives to accomplish, it is in the haunting power of its dreadful visuals that the game is already brushing against greatness. The game does not cease in its steady flow of chilling imagery: sterile hospital rooms deteriorate to pestilent ruin; blood and severe rust coat walls and floors; razor patches trap bodies near messages written in the victims' blood; creatures looking like humans inflicted with every birth defect found in nature shamble aimlessly in the darkness. Nothing quite like this has been shown before in a video game. It is not tawdry, contrived, or typical. Its style and design are a pinnacle of horror creation — bizarre, disturbing, hideous.

Like any good creep show, a gory game is only as good as its monsters, and the frightening creations in *Silent Hill* are great ones. Zombie-like doctors and nurses with scalpels in their grasp stumble around hospital gurneys; disturbing silhouettes of what resemble bloated fetuses with badly inflamed spinal chords materialize in the school halls; starved hounds that seem to have their carcasses turned inside out run outside their bloody dog houses. It is when these impressive creations begin moving around the darkness that devilish design turns to visceral attraction. Alerted by the shrieking sound of a broken radio that seems to channel the enemies' evil presence, we know that danger is nearby, but because of the blanket of darkness limiting our field of view, every single step is taken with tense caution.

These creatures seem tormented, left to rot in their sickened state. They move clumsily in the darkness, aimlessly hidden in corners and shadows, almost inviting us to pass in their direction. And once we do, they strike with an inexplicable speed and resilience, so incited by our presence that quick, subsequent attacks are inevitable. Once the monsters manage to move in, fumbling in close range with a cumbersome pistol usually results in a futile situation, and running is the only option. But get backed into a

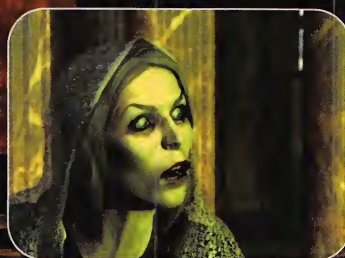
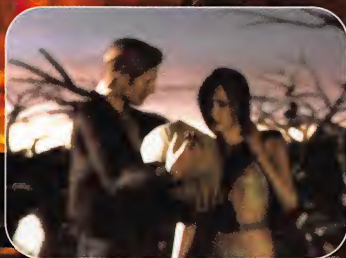
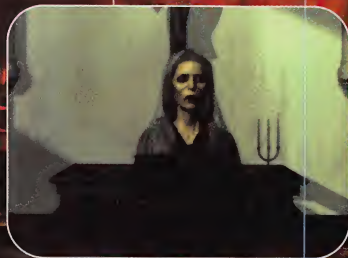


'You will encounter a wall of darkness and the wrath of the underworld.'

wall or between, say, a pair of hospital beds, and escape can become quickly futile. Because they rely on crude vision and hearing to detect Harry's presence, by turning off the flashlight and hiding still as the creatures slowly shuffle by – one of the most genuinely unnerving scenarios ever staged in a video game – confrontation can be avoided.

Why do I persist in describing the atmosphere and situations in this game? So you can try and grasp just how important the visual stimulus of *Silent Hill* is. The game works on many levels, excelling in its use of puzzles, tightly wound action, focused exploration, sound and entertaining (if not campy) dialogue. But its desire to break free from excellence and stand a triumph will be fueled by the images we see as much as the tasks that we perform. *Silent Hill* is showing us things we've never seen in video games before. The game enters into the realm of an oppressive dread, and lives there. It is here where video game makers are working at the edge of their abilities and inspirations.

Haunting Imagery



Light struggles to exist in *Silent Hill*. Only emptiness survives in the suffocating presence of its gloom. Despite the limitations inherent in the engine, the real-time environments in the game do a marvelous job of forming this atmosphere, but it is in the haunting beauty of the CG images that the game has no equal. Takayoshi Sato, the lone individual responsible for the rendering and character design, has been able to

imbue his designs with a portrayal of emotion that eerily reflect the bleakness pervading the town of *Silent Hill*. There appears to be a sadness, an emotional void bordering on madness that weighs on every character. These are striking images, examples of an artistic vision that has not been stifled by the limitations of technology – a rarity in this industry.

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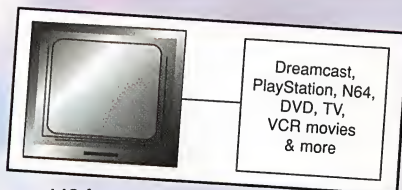
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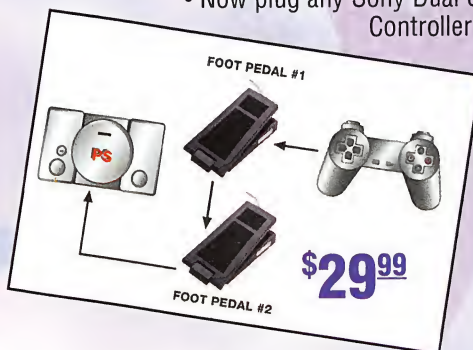
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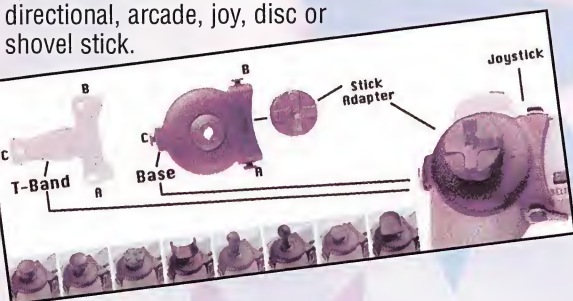
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Carrier ← E5

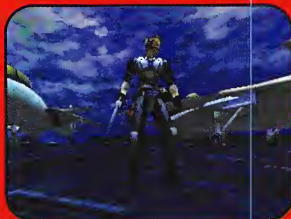
BY MIKE GRIFFIN

▲ CRUISING NUCLEAR SEAS 1101001 as the navy's darkest secrets fight back

Secret Operations... You won't be seeing Kathy Lee on board this big ship singing the "If you could see me now..." tune. If she, or any other foolhardy sea-fairer were aboard the Heimdal Carrier, the risk of grim death would be severe. Unfortunately, the Heimdal is a military aircraft carrier, and it was sent out to sea with a full crew in order to conduct secret weapons testing.

The newly built, super-advanced vessel was an extremely costly project, designed to be the ultimate carrier. High-ranking officers were on board to prepare and observe the experimental ordinance, and the mission carried them far out to sea. Time passed and there were no reports from

the Heimdal. Soon all hope for communication to the ship was abandoned, and a plan unfolded. The Navy quietly assembled an investigative task force comprised of five specialists from various divisions within the military. In a short time they were whisked away by helicopter to the ship. After an uneventful journey, the mammoth ship came into view. As the team checked their gear in preparation for the drop-off, the chopper's alarm system suddenly went wild. A missile was on a direct intercept course with the chopper, its point of origin: the Heimdal. There was no time to consider the revelation as the missile struck, forcing an emergency landing.



It's *Resident Evil* style, high-res, fully polygonal, and it's all real-time! While Jaleco have yet to flex their 3D muscle, it's pretty clear that *Carrier* will feature very strong polygonal graphics. Dreamcast makes it possible!



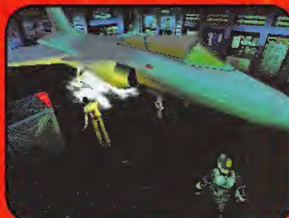
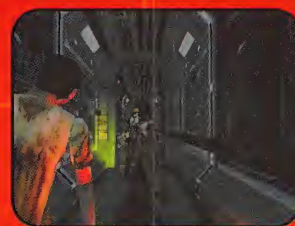
The Multicast System: At the heart of *Carrier* is the Multicast System. Devised by script director Hideki Kakinuma, whose past design credits include *Detonator Organ* and *Nectaris*, Multicast is *Carrier's* system of interactivity between characters. You see, when the chopper went down on the decks of the Heimdal, the surviving investigation team was scattered around the ship. In effect, each person has to initiate his or her own solo research mission.

You, the player, will be allowed to choose one of the two main characters: Jack and Jecipher. The other four experts will continue with their own mission, even as you play in real-time with your own character. You might even encounter the other main character. This is the greater half of the Multicast System. The other half involves the actions of your character and the effect you have on the other members of the team. As you trigger certain elements within Heimdal's vast polygonal environment (such as computer systems, etc.), the other characters will react and adjust in accordance. The time of day is another factor, as certain triggers only become available at night. The other characters also react differently depending on the time of day, employing new strategies and alternate methods of investigation. Essentially you could run into any other character anytime, just like an enemy.

innocent men mutated and killed 1101001 as sinister factions lose control of deadly experiments

The Carrier: It describes two very important elements of the game: The aircraft carrier itself, and the clinical term "carrier," meaning someone who carries a disease. The Heimdal is a huge aircraft carrier designed specifically for regional conflict and defense following the Cold War. It is revealed that a secret organization is on board the ship. Although their exact intentions are unclear, sources say they are conducting experimentation beyond the known testing being conducted by the military. This operation is being funded by NOA, a privately owned firm supported by a weapons development agency. The experimentation may involve strange weapons systems, further supported by the connection with the unknown agency. In light of all this, the situation on board the Heimdal may be incredibly chaotic – especially considering the ship is equipped with a full complement of nuclear warheads.

Worst of all, a virus has spread through the ship. Death is around every corner, and those who managed to assimilate the virus (or vice versa) have been transformed into hideous, violent mutations – veritable concubines of disease and malice. These monstrous radioactive abominations will hunt you down while the Heimdal balances before the precipice of Ground Zero! ☞



Jecipher



Jecipher is one of *Carrier's* main selectable characters. She is one of the Navy's most skilled and respected officers. Although she is a masterful technician as a Navy Intelligence officer, her combat abilities equal that of the most experienced male soldiers. She appreciates the seriousness of the situation with the Heimdal, but has applied for the mission for other reasons entirely. Jecipher is anxiously awaiting her marriage to an officer who might be on board the carrier. She faithfully carries her fiancé's picture in a necklace pendant.

Jack



As one of *Carrier's* other main characters, Jack represents the strong selectable male side. He is a powerful, highly-trained Navy Seal operative who has seen many missions, but none as unsure as the carrier investigation. He joins the five-member drop team when he discovers that his brother was part of the Heimdal's crew. As unsettling as this may be, even to a trained professional like Jack, he knows the mission commander Barg and embarks confidently. Any Navy Seal has heard the legendary stories of Barg during his Seal days.

Lang



Lang is a master of subterfuge and stealth assassination using knives. He was enlisted into the Navy Seals just one week prior to the Heimdal operation because of his notorious anti-terrorist activities. He is a quiet and self-centered character with an extremely vulgar vocabulary and arrogant disposition. Despite his character flaws, nobody within the team questions his considerable strength and unmatched ability with small hand weapons. That's all they have to go on, since his personal file is strictly confidential.

Nobul



Dr. Nobul has a certified doctorate in Organic Engineering. He is a very intelligent man. Several years ago Nobul's theory on Unexistential Synapse had a great impact on the worldwide medical scene. He quickly became a famous world authority on experimental Organics, and spent many of the following years researching experimental projects. Once he hears of the bizarre situation on board the Heimdal and the testing Navy scientists were conducting, he takes a great interest in the investigative mission. He is recommended by Barg, a man Nobul once saved on the battlefield.

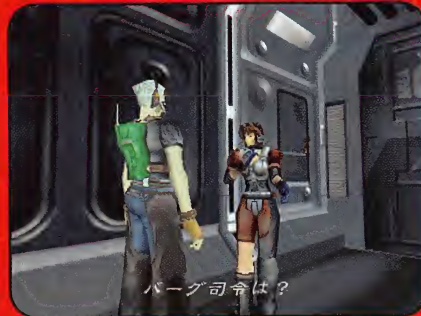
Barg



Barg is a highly-respected veteran within the Navy. Currently he belongs to the Navy Special Mission Commando force, where he will serve as commander during the Heimdal incident. Although Barg is a very large man (weighing in at 120 kg), he is surprisingly agile and incredibly proficient in weapons combat. Some believe that he may be a little too self-confident, but after years of proven service this attitude seems to be well-deserved. Barg is also an excellent caretaker of his men, both in the field and in the planning room. He is forever in debt to Dr. Nobul for saving his life in battle.

3D infiltration, combat, and intrigue

explosive weaponry and bloody carnage — Jaleco's best?



(Top left) Team members meet and converse. (Top-middle) Fragments of brain and innards shower the screen! (Top Right) Jack and Jecipher prepare to tag-team a mutant. Check out the horizon. (Bottom left) Deadly accurate head-shot dispatches a crazed mutant officer. (Bottom middle) Jecipher runs into Mr. Sociable, Lang. (Bottom right) Lovely, fully polygonal jets cover the decks.



frame gride

BY MIKE GRIFFIN

Fans of Armored Core look alive!

From software are bringing fighting mech action to DC!



Mech fans are a dedicated crew of gamers who live for ultra-futuristic weaponry and impossibly destructive fire-power. Complex, intelligent design is as important as unique animation and crushing effects...and control is key. A mech suit is created to represent a person in robotic form – to act as an extension of the beings that construct and operate the advanced gear. It has to move and feel like an agile, capable humanoid machine.

From Software have quickly become superb designers of Mech action games. The *Armored Core* series has amassed an impressive following of Mech-loving constituents on the PS – fans that are ready to play side stories and sequels the moment they're made available. Now From are preparing a powerful Dreamcast Mech fighting title using their proprietary AC game system.

Frame Gride (the name is subject to change) is a Mech fighter that, unlike AC's military theme, will be a fantasy-based, pure

combat game. As a result, the battles will emphasize close-range attacks using swords and grapples, and the visual style will be oriented towards visionary, movie-quality drama and effects.

Initially, you'll have to construct a Mech fighter using Heavy, Middle, and Light parts. Obviously, each has its own merits. There will be a Shield command in *FG* as well (unlike *AC*), and a special Mana Drive located on the back of the Mechs which allows highly customizable functions to be used in combat (see right). Once your Mech is tailor made, the four-part Story Mode awaits.

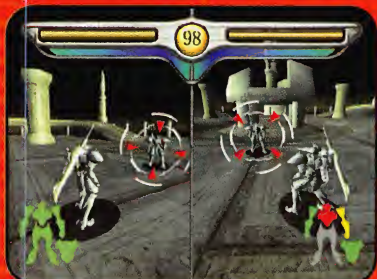
There are nine boss characters to destroy in each mode, and each one releases rare items and Liberate Stones that can be attached to your mech or placed in the Mana Drive. There will also be smaller minions to blow away to reveal parts. In terms of versus modes, players will use their saved, custom parts against one another in huge 60-fps arenas, and From will even allow co-op combat versus the CPU Mechs! Cool!



"4

19-01

(Top) *Frame Gride's* extremely well shaded 3D environment. (Bottom) The smooth split-screen mode. Two players can bash each other, or team-up against tough CPU Mechs! Great idea! (Far right) Check out the gorgeous mechs.



SuperH



XG



Rockwell

SWORD

1 The last line of defense is the Sword. When you use the Plasma or Electro Sword it means that Rifle, Cannon, and Missile attacks aren't enough. *FG* encourages well-timed Sword attacks.

RIFLE

2 The standard method of firing with most Mechs is the Rifle. Ammo supply is usually high or unlimited, and firing rates are typically very fast.

CANNON

3 A Mech fighter's second most frequently used attack method is the Cannon. It is much slower and more difficult to lock on, but the power is incredible.

MISSILE

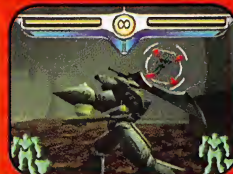
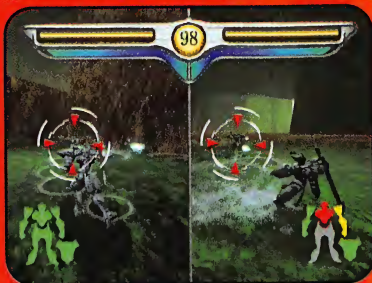
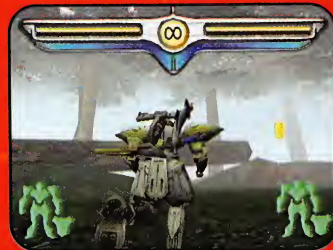
4 Always a spectacular display of ordinance, a Mech fighter's Missile attack will almost inevitably cause major damage. In addition, glancing blows or shrapnel from detonation will also strike hard.

SHIELD

5 Ideal for deflecting weak rifle sprays, absorbing crushing Cannon blasts, or catching a couple Missiles in formation, the Shield is invaluable.

MANA DRIVE

6 Inserting collected Liberate Stones into one of four Mana Drive slots yields various results. The first slot determines weapon attributes in Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind. Some Mech types function better using a certain element. The 2nd and 3rd slots are for special effects like HP recovery and deflectors. The 4th, most prolific slot, allows one to summon guardians to join you in combat.



JK
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Knight and Baby opens and is stuffed with beautiful CG cinemas. Attention to detail and vibrant color is evident throughout the quest (far right).



Once in awhile in this wonderfully peculiar industry of ours, I still happen upon the unexpected. Such is the case with Tamsoft's *Knight and Baby*, which now happily comes our way under the hyper-cliché guise of *Guardian Crusade*. After an import review based, for the most part, on the game's design, uniqueness, soundtrack, and premise, I was about to settle in for the long, mysterious struggle of playing out the Japanese version when the news came in that Activision had already begun translating it! From import review to a 75 percent translated game in mere weeks! And from Activision, no less – a company not known for quirky Japanese role-playing fare such as this. I guess people are finally starting to realize that the RPG market is where it's at. *Knight and Baby* (I can't call it *Guardian Crusade*) is the story of a young knight who happens upon the other-worldly task of returning a baby monster (or so it would seem) to its natural domain. What looks like a cross between a pig and a rump roast is actually a sort of virtual pet. Baby fights along side of you but performs in accordance with your treatment and interaction; in other words, he becomes a product of your rela-

GUARDIAN CRUSADE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Tamsoft's first RPG brings a knight, a fat, pink virtual pet, and 'living toys' into a fantastical new world... Hot from Japan, Knight and Baby makes its U.S. debut this winter!



Tamsoft keep the fight scenes engaging in many ways. Along with a quiver of wickedly creative beasts, "living toys" and Baby fight at your side for an endless array of offensive and defensive attacks. Over 70 spells are at your command! Use 50 weapons and over a hundred suits of armor to do your bidding!



(Above) Baby assumes many forms. Here he stretches into a knife to slice the enemy to ribbons. Mistreat him and he'll turn on you! So keep his fat, pink belly stuffed. This ain't no Tamagotchi!

tionship. Making the fights even more diverse (and perhaps a bit wacky) and keeping them from falling into a repetitive state are the situational "living toys" that you find throughout the quest and can use in battle. From voodoo dolls to poison vipers, you can build your own personal quiver of killer toys to do your bidding.

Visually, *K&B* delivers one of the sharpest, brightest polygonal landscapes in the PS arsenal. The rich, vivid landscapes, towns, and villages can all be rotated 360 degrees at any time, providing the player with the utmost control and vision. Control, by the way, is excellent. The duo runs with fluidity and ease via the analog pad, and the menus are quick to learn and easy to use. For the most part, the overall gameplay is pretty much standard RPG fare in terms of design, but in function it is both unique and intriguing. First off (and a feature that I deem highly commendable) is the fact that, while running around on infested terrain, you can see your enemies, which are represented on the map as pink and white ghosts. So instead of the usual scenario (being thrust uncontrollably into battle every few seconds), you only have to fight when you are caught. So if you feel that you're levelled up substantially, you can do your best to avoid battle as you run from place to place. And if you are not, you can pick your battles when and where you want them.

Apart from the battles, you'll find all the basics: locate a town or village, receive an order or request, and move on to the next scenario. There are, however, some great plot twists and clever diversions, along with many excellent CG cut scenes that pull *K&B* together. But what drives any RPG are the events themselves, and this is where Tamsoft's industry savvy really pays off. They have created a world full of levity and fantastical situations that are a joy to unfold. Coupled with fantastic musical accompaniment and hordes of spells, enemies,

and locations, this is one RPG that is definitely worth getting excited about. ⚡



While *Knight & Baby* may seem skewed for a younger audience, I assure you that even seasoned role-playing fans will find a suitable amount of fighting strategy and story-telling within. Tamsoft have crafted a superbly entertaining RPG worthy of many sequels.



The only ground vehicles I can think of in real life that come optionally equipped with rocket launchers, machine guns, 20mm cannons, grenade dischargers and anti-aircraft guns can be found in Jane's *Tank Recognition Guide*. You know: battle tanks, APCs, infantry combat vehicles, self-propelled guns and SAMs. These are all lumbering vehicles of mass destruction called upon only when military action is necessary. So what would inspire anyone to weld such an arsenal of artillery onto the roofs, fenders, hoods, and trunks of the family car? The answer to that question depends on which universe you are talking about: ours, or that which exists in *Interstate 82*, Activision's upcoming sequel to *Interstate 76*.

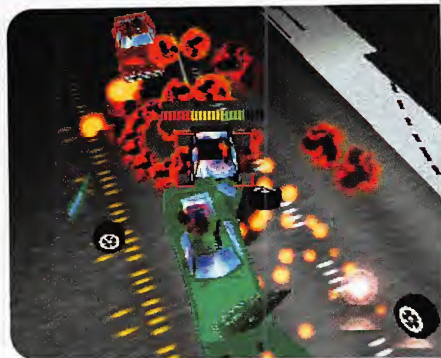
Like its predecessor, *I 82* is a game that thrives on intense vehicular combat but takes it to a wide variety of places – some common, some not so common. In its world, highly modified everyday cars clash in fast-paced vehicular battles staged on highways, plains, deserts, tunnels, a secret underground sub-crustal subway system that the government uses to carry all sorts of items around the nation and world, and super-secret military bases, like Area 49, Area 31 and Area 5. Machine guns streak the night sky, rockets soar leaving smoke trails and lighting the ter-

rain upon detonation, and government satellites send huge ion blasts to the ground, devastating anything close by. Cars explode, flak flies, helicopters plummet and the thunderous roar of war fills the air.

To create a visual experience that lives up to this diverse, raging universe, Activision armed the game with an appropriated version

of the *Heavy Gear 2* engine that gives the developers plenty of power and flexibility to experiment. The environments are huge, sprawling

landscapes that allow for true freedom of movement and real-world physics, and the visual effects, such as smoke kicking out from spinning tires and reflective



01

Interstate 82

BY DAVE REES





The explosive action that takes place in the outdoor scenes will be heightened by some great visual effects such as these.

surfaces, add enough visual finesse to present a more believable world.

But these additions are merely aesthetic in nature. Much more intriguing in scope is the ability to get out of the car and pull off a variety of moves on foot. Zach Norman, the game's producer and writer, hints at how this feature will deepen the experience: "At the end of the first mission you have to enter a bar, but the bar is down an alley that you can't drive to. While outside of the car, you will have a handgun, you can run and jump, jack people out of their cars; when they're driving slowly you can pull them out." You will even be able to roll left or right to get out of the way of a car that's coming right at you, ala *Dirty Harry*.

Just like *I 76*, the game is also driven by a deep story and a well-written and acted script that injects it with enough flavor and adult-oriented wit to please those looking for a more modern, dramatic gaming experience. In the wake of *I 76*'s storyline, the plot is thick with mystery and intrigue right from the start. "Groove goes missing, and Sky, his youngest sister, finds out that he's gone and calls Taurus for help," states Norman. "You, as Taurus, go on this quest to find Groove. And you find out that he stumbled onto all kinds of nefarious plots and evil actions such as the President trying to hire the contras to fight in a private war and all sorts of other stuff. It's pretty controversial stuff and pretty political... What I wanted to do, creatively, was push the boundaries of the [*I 76*] universe and embrace more of a different vibe. *I 76* was *Mad Max* meets *Pulp Fiction*, and now its kind of *Road Warrior* meets *Miami Vice*."

Politics, corruption, conspiracies, mystery, and suspense? Area 51?

Missing people? I have a feeling that those ubiquitous aliens will somehow make their way into the picture. Perhaps a "meets *The X-Files*" was left out of his description of the game's inspirations.

Much was made by the press of *I 76*'s funk-inspired soundtrack when the game was first released in '97. Perhaps too much, as the average fan of *I 76* didn't exactly fit the mold that defined the retro-happy gaming press. Mr. Norman boldly echoes this sentiment: "We essentially made that user base into funk fans. They weren't really funk fans going into it. They were funk fans *leaving* the experience. So as far as I am concerned, we're just going to do it again with new wave music."

The potential entertainment value of *I 82* is evidently high, but this holds true even without mentioning its multiplayer options, which introduce some unique concepts – none more curious than playing as a pedestrian. "Being able to be a pedestrian adds a very fundamental and very interesting change... The pedestrian mode means we don't give you credit for the kill until the pedestrian dies, as the driver," says Norman. "So I can bail my ride, I could get into some other car, I could jump in a helicopter and if I can make it back to the regen point by hook or by crook, I'm gold and nobody gets the kill. The great thing about being a pedestrian is that you never show up on radar, the bad thing that you are a fleshy water bag running around on a battlefield where people are shooting rockets."

While the wide list of options and amenities in *I 82* certainly adds value to the overall experience, at its heart, the game is shaping up to be an excellent vehicular combat game, with a powerful accelerated engine that can generate a very exciting, believable atmosphere – something that its competitors to this day lack. ☺





A new *Ridge Racer* game is always cause for celebration. Since the original arcade inception, and more significantly, the brilliant, first-generation PlayStation conversion, Namco's *R Racer* series has thrilled many. Who could resist the insane speeds, pulse-pounding tunes, and best of all, stunning course design that both dazzled the eyes and pleased the thumb (or wrists, for all you NegCon freaks). Now, Namco are set to bestow upon us their most ambitious *Ridge Racer* game yet, along with an all-new dedicated controller, the JogCon. This new proportional controller features true force feedback as the centrally mounted wheel pushes against your thumbs with surprising force.

Ridge Racer Type 4 differs from its predecessors most dramatically in that there's actually more than one course! Instead of one track with three variations, *R4* delivers three unique locations with two to three variations each. This is still a far cry from most current driving games' double-digit course counts, but as always, Namco's design excellence quells any complaining one might foolishly engage in.



R4TM

RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

BY MIKE HOBBS



The long-legged Reiko Nagase returns as the beautiful "virtual idol" for *R4*, and introduces each race. She also breaks a heel in the stylish CG intro and needs a lift. Badly. She's such a tease.



N Normal (ノーマル) 順走
R Reverse (リバース) 逆走



NAMCO ACTIVE FORCE CONTROLLER



RR



For the first time in the series, a two-player split-screen mode has been implemented. While this is sadly in lieu of the preferable but impractical and infrequently used link modes, it is a fantastic split screen with a surprisingly smooth frame rate and very good control of the draw-in.

As for the physical look of the new courses in *R4*, Namco have truly outdone themselves. Nighttime airports, gorgeous cityscapes, and twisting mountain courses constantly impress. The tracks are aglow with wonderful ambience and many portions of the nearby scenery are spot lit with truly realistic results. A street light, for example, will cast itself onto an overpass with uncanny accuracy. In another course, bursting fireworks overhead throw a colorful, flickering light all over the track. If there's something missing, however, it is *Rage Racer's* nose-bleed heights and more complex and challenging corner combinations. Still, *R4* is head and shoulders above any other generic racer and Namco deserve accolades for the work they've done here, as these are the best looking courses ever to grace a PS racer.

New to *Ridge Racer Type 4* is the inclusion of racing teams and their respective owners. By combining different teams and car makers, you open the myriad vehicles Namco have designed for *R4*. In a break from tradition, you'll find a few oddities sprinkled in this mix, like a speedy rocket car and an open wheeled racer. And while there's no individual upgrading of the vehicles as in *Rage Racer*, the variety is unprecedented for the series.

Much has been made of *R4's* replays and how they could potentially eclipse those found in the brilliant *Gran Turismo*. For the record, *GT* still

holds the edge in garnering a truer sense of reality, as its cars pitch and yaw with frightening realism. *R4's* replays are, in a more overt sense, more exciting to watch. Its cars careen through long stretches of the game's gorgeous scenery with dramatic dutch tilts and zooms highlighting the action. You can see little headlights switch on when cars enter tunnels and vehicles positively shine with their great looking reflection effect. And at the touch of a button, you can apply a cool motion blur to the replay.

Aurally, *R4* soars with satisfying engine and tire sounds, and, of course, stellar music. You'll hear more instruments this time around, along with a pinch of vocals. While some may complain that the new tunes don't have quite the hard edge that drove the previous games, there's no denying their catchiness or the fact that they still fit the action like a glove.

Though this is but a preview, our nearly finished game reveals Namco's unwavering dedication as they carry on with one of the finest racing series ever created. What remains to be seen, however, and what will only be revealed through extensive play of a complete version, is whether *R4* is brilliant, or merely great, when judged against its fore-runners. But without question, an incredible game by any measure is on its way. >#<

The first game to give Gran Turismo a run for its money.
Namco unleash the biggest and best looking Ridge Racer game yet.



To be included with *R4* is a special premium disc featuring a high-spec, 60-fps version of the original *Ridge Racer*. Though only the time trial time attack modes are available and there are only two music tracks (*Grip* and *Ridge Racer*), it's amazing seeing the original game in this state. 60 fps *Ridge Racer* is an incredible thrill and as visceral a driving experience as ever. You'll also find on the premium disc a 30-fps *Ridge Racer* to compare and a catalogue all of Namco's '98 merchandise.



FOUR
▶▶▶ REAL RACING ROOTS '99





Tai Fu

BY DAVE HALVERSON



TAI FU



After enduring several versions of Dreamworks' *Tai-Fu* that were, quite simply, disjointed (justifiably so – they were miles from completion), the game is now starting to take shape. Although there are still issues to be dealt with and bugs to be ironed out, *Tai-Fu* is shaping up to be a game that I might actually go out and spend money on. If the designers take the necessary time to fine-tune it, a promising new franchise could be on the horizon. Anyone who remembers the 16-bit fighter *Brutal*, in which ancient animal clans did battle, is familiar with the motif behind *Tai-Fu*. Think ancient Chinese themes amongst a population of humanoid animals and reptiles. I've always thought this marriage a formula destined for greatness (or at the very least, goodness), although as of yet, no one has been able to make a game of it. Perhaps Dreamworks Interactive can change all of that.

The character himself, *Tai-Fu*, is one of the most attractive in terms of design I've seen since Crash. While his Keifer Sutherland-like voice is so off the mark it's actually funny, he moves as one would imagine a humanoid tiger would, leaping and bounding through 3D environments. And when he's not doing Keifer, Tai's even got a robust roar. He's the sort of character you can imagine as an action figure, or up on the big screen in an animated feature, and he's surrounded by a cast of fur-bearing friends and reptilian foes that it seems were destined for the silver screen. So, it's safe to say that this portion of the game is being masterfully manipulated. Where Dreamwork's challenges lie is in the realm of gameplay. If *Tai-Fu* is to be an action, adventure and platforming game, then it must excel in each category, and while it does some things right at this point, it does some others... well, not so well. The battles I like. Tai can block, perform jumping attacks, has an array of punches (that can be dealt low or high) and eventually learns several forms of magic. Coupled with the enemies' Al, which is very good in relation to the game's progression, the fights are more than menial fisticuffs meant to simply delay your journey to the level's end (see *Fighting Force*). It is in the platforming area where problems arise. Being that Tai's feet (or, um, paws) are naturally positioned far apart, small platforms can be a pain to negotiate, and precision jumps (which are required) take on a haphazard feel. These are problems that can be alleviated; I just hope they are. The collision, too, is suspect. Tai merges with certain polygons a bit too much and the edges in the game seem to have too much give.

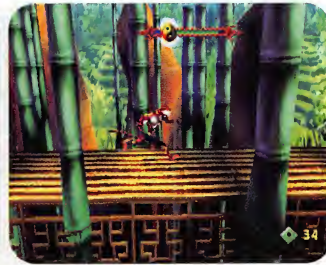
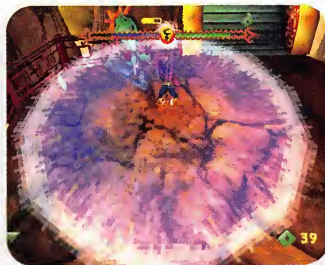
Again, these problems can, and hopefully will, be fixed. As for the bosses, so far so good, although I found one entirely too hard to kill with the scrap of energy I had left after the hideous climb beforehand. Which leads me to the game's balance, which also needs some minor tweaking.

In between meals, Dreamworks are incorporating real-time cinemas (à la *Crash Bandicoot*) that do nicely to tell the tale, but the



voice acting leaves much to be desired, and the way the camera rushes to the side of whomever is speaking seems a bit unnecessary. And, finally, the soundtrack so far is excellent. A cinema-quality score is well at hand.

So there you have it. *Tai-Fu* may indeed be a game you should begin to get excited about. With proper care in the all-important final stages of development, this could be the game to make up for the beautiful but totally unbalanced *Lost World*. Whether they like it or not, with the Dreamworks name comes high expectations. ⚡





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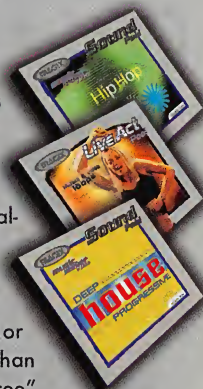
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A shadow is a most peculiar thing. A cool, inky patch of darkness that keeps its contents a mystery – unless we submerge ourselves into it. It then becomes our own hidden world that provides a private window to our surroundings. In ancient times, proper use of such opaque spots was often the difference between success and failure for thieves. The dank, dark corners of building-lined, cobblestone streets became sanctuaries that kept them safe from detection.

This concept is but one example of the many necessary tactics in Looking Glass Studios' upcoming game, *Thief*. The game introduces players to a number of stealth maneuvers and actions of trickery and deceit that truly turn the dubious role of a master thief into a gripping 3D gaming experience. Providing an intuitive avenue to analyze and make use of everything around you, such as a clever visibility meter and the ability to pick up just about anything and throw it to distract your enemies, it empowers players to plan their actions of stealth and thievery with an open mind.

At the same time, this style of play demands immense ambition and creativity from its developers to be successful, and Looking Glass are thankfully delivering. Each object has a multitude of properties that effect its behavior – proper weight and buoyancy, reactions to environmental changes, accurate sound emissions when hitting different surfaces. Enemies can detect you by sight

or by sound, which adds much more authenticity to the unnerving experience of stealthily following soldiers to your goal, tiptoeing into haunted mansions, or hiding slain bodies from the eyes of your foes to avoid your presence. While it is not as bold as *Trespasser* in its physics model, or even bold in its visual appeal by today's standards, the engine is extremely effective at creating a smooth, brooding atmosphere. In the end, that is much more important to the gaming experience that *Thief* vies for anyway.

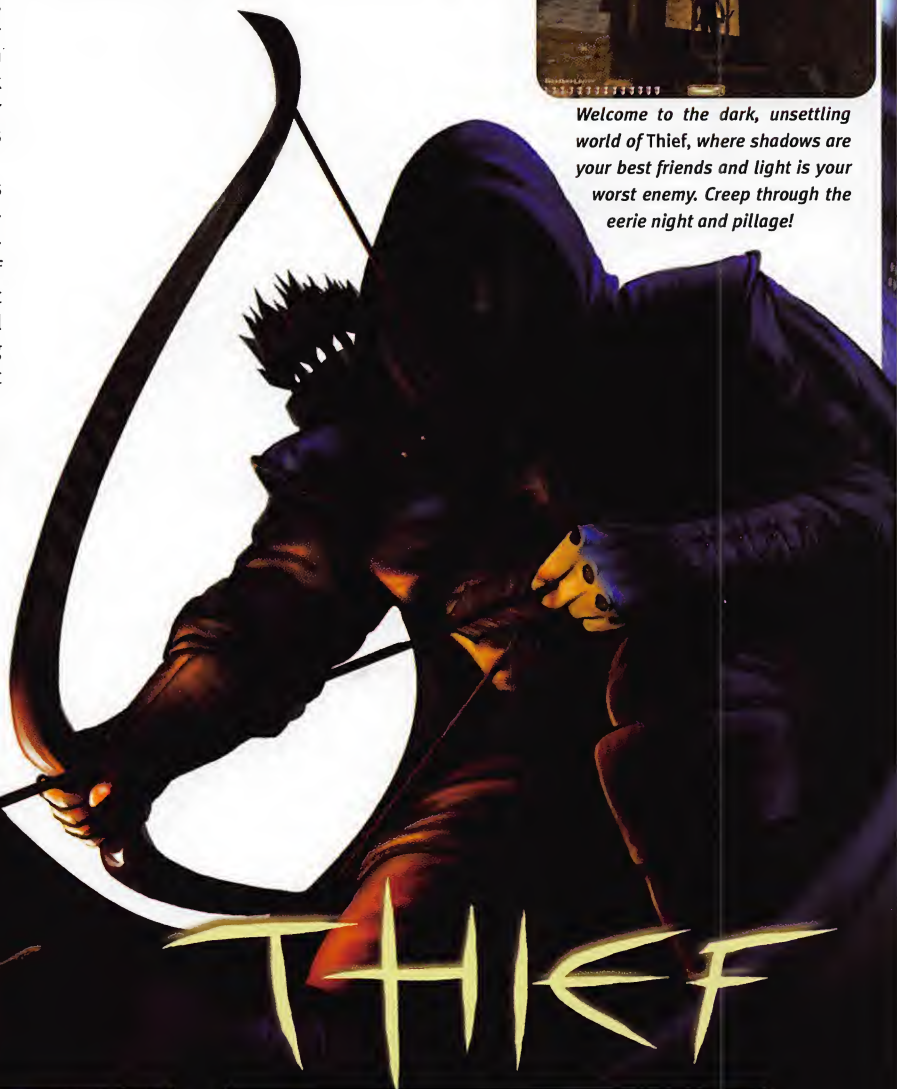
In line with the ongoing trend of developers striving for diversity, interactive gameplay, and originality in 3D FPS titles, *Thief* is shaping up to be a brilliantly original, engrossing example. ☹



Welcome to the dark, unsettling world of *Thief*, where shadows are your best friends and light is your worst enemy. Creep through the eerie night and pillage!

THIEF

BY DAVE REES



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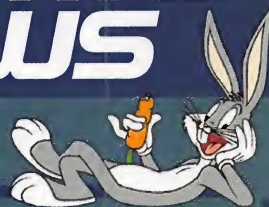
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INFOGRAMMES PREVIEWS

BY MIKE HOBBS



Infogrames made a quick stop at the GR offices recently with a ton of new wares for us to sample. A slate of new Looney Tunes titles led the charge with offerings on PS, N64, and GameBoy Color. »

STARSHOT

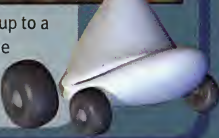
This French-made, 3D platform/adventure was one of the more promising titles on display. Formerly titled *Space Circus*, this colorful romp features a proprietary graphics engine that allows ten characters and 50,000 polygons to be displayed simultaneously.

There are a great deal of platforming elements in *Starshot*,

with trickier jumps than are usually seen in the current breed of 3D action titles.

Shooting action is also in evidence as *Starshot* has the ability to collect icons, allowing him a certain number of shots with which to take down foes. Unfortunately, the frame rate was not yet up to a smooth 30, though this could very well be improved as the game reaches completion.

N64/Q1 '99



V-RALLY



From the team that brought you *V-Rally* on PS comes a new N64 version. Featuring real rally cars from the likes of Renault, Toyota, Seat, and others, it fills a gap in the crowded but generally lackluster N64 racing library. Attractive features include variable terrain and working headlights. Also, championship rally driver Ari Vatanen served as a consultant on the game. Unfortunately, the *V-Rally* team is obviously having trouble coming to grips with the N64 hardware, for the engine on display is far from beautiful, with intense filtering and fog. Let's hope the visual get cleaned up before the game's March release.

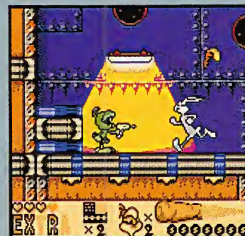
N64/March '99



LOONEY TUNES: CARROT CRAZY

The sure-to-be-popular GameBoy Color gets its first Looney Tunes game with *Carrot Crazy*. In this crisp-looking side scroller (thank the GBC's brilliant TFT screen), you play as Bugs or Lola Bunny, out searching for (what else?) stolen carrots. Through five worlds, the unique attributes of each character must be utilized.

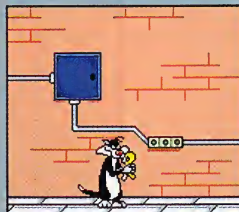
COLOR GAMEBOY/DECEMBER '98



LOONEY TUNES: TWOUBLE

Another GameBoy Color offering, this Spanish-developed title starring Sylvester and Tweety wasn't quite as strong as the Bugs game, but held some interesting concepts nonetheless. Playing as Sylvester, you've got to chase Tweety through many familiar Warner locales, such as Granny's House. Between levels, colorful cut scenes depict Tweety's ceaseless escapes from Sylvester.

COLOR GAMEBOY/DECEMBER '98



LOONEY TUNES: LOST IN TIME

From *Jersey Devil* developers Behaviour comes the 3D action title *Looney Tunes: Lost in Time*. Utilizing the already very cartoony *Jersey Devil* engine, *Lost in Time* endeavors to capture the flavor of the kitschy '60s Bugs to good effect. Unfortunately, it was still way too early to draw any conclusions as to the quality of the eventual play, but it seemed well intentioned enough.

PLAYSTATION/SPRING '99

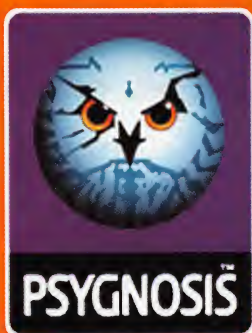


LOONEY TUNES: SPACE RACE

Shown on tape only, this unique looking N64 combat racer pits the Looney Tunes favorites together in a race to save the planet from total annihilation, courtesy of Marvin the Martian's Nintendium Q-64 Explosive Space Modulator. Again, this title was very early, but promised are a four-player split-screen mode and loads of many antics.

N64/SPRING '99





PSYGNOSIS PREVIEWS

BY MIKE GRIFFIN & MIKE HOBBS

ELIMINATOR

Psygnosis have always been known for their fast-paced futuristic shooters and racers, but lately their designs aren't quite as progressive as they once were: *Wipeout* and *Colony Wars* come to mind. Sure, the Psygnosis prerequisites such as lens flares and colorful lighting are still the standard, but some games (i.e. *Blast Radius*) are blatant, inferior derivatives of better games. Along with *Psybadek*, *Rollcage*, and now *Eliminator*, it seems as though Psygnosis will continue to move forward, but at a slightly slower pace.

Eliminator is really solid in a few areas. Large arenas populated by loads of mechanized freaks shift quickly all around at 30 fps. The engine is very solid, but the level architecture and enemy design (in a similar fashion to *Forsaken*) is usually simplistic – much like the gameplay, in fact. The story explains that you're a prisoner of war being held at a military weapons-testing facility (?), and your captors plan to test their experimental ordinance on you! So basically you're always on the run, hovering and blasting your way through a network of metallic arenas. The controls are a little weird: forward throttle, L1 & R1 strafing (which works great), primary and secondary weapon, and then – and this is the weird part – a flip-around button. Instead of a reverse, you flip right over, changing perspective instantly. It's very awkward at first. Regardless, manic circle strafing is the best way to wreak havoc, so the flip isn't a big factor in battle. The weapons are subpar, the level design is a little bland, and the enemies aren't too impressive. And still, everything works just fine. So *Eliminator* is solid, in that typical Psygnosis way, and yet it's uncharacteristically stagnant in design.

The gameplay seems to be finalized, hence the minor complaints. In all other ways, *Eliminator* is already very competent, but I'm still hoping to see a lot more in the reviewable version. ☞



Witness the solid arena-like levels in these pics. Situations involving effects, large robotic enemies, and far-stretching environments (right) constantly shift at 30 fps. How is this possible? Check out the simple polygonal shapes in the environment... Bingo!



ROLL CAGE

English developers ATD (Attention to Detail) have always tried to be different, and their take on the popular combat racing genre bears this out in good form. In *Rollcage*, you choose one of six indestructible vehicles in a no-holds-barred race to the finish line. Since receiving a playable version, we've been able to give the game a good once over, and it's a fast, all-too-often out-of-control blast. Driving upside-down and on the sides of walls is a manic experience, and being able to blow up surrounding buildings and block opponents is a wonderfully satisfying gameplay element. And even though Psygnosis did not develop this game themselves, *Rollcage* has the Psygnosis look with flashy and vibrant lighting effects and prodigious lens flares. We'll have a proper review of *Rollcage* next month. ☞



PC
CD
ROM

TRIBES

DEVELOPER: dynamix PUBLISHER: sierra AVAILABLE: winter

Quake players listen up: How loyal are you to your clan? Do you work well in team situations? Does your devotion empower you with a degree of savagery not felt when playing solo? Do you fearlessly protect your flag and put your own life on the line to protect the lives of your comrades? Then *Tribes* might be for you, especially if you are looking for something with the same heart-pounding action of *Quake DM*, but with much more depth: Something that would allow you to traverse sprawling outdoor landscapes, coordinate tactical maneuvers, man nearby gun emplacements, protect an actual base, call for reserves, jump on a nearby hover bike and soar over rolling hills, and infiltrate enemy headquarters. No, this game is not a real-time strategy game.

Tribes is destined to change the world of 3D gaming. While its RTS and FPS inspirations are obvious, it fuses the two genres and pushes the resulting amalgam in a new direction – multiplayer-only squad warfare. That's right – the game has no single-player mode. Staged in a beautiful 3D world of immense proportions, you control a soldier of a tribe from either a first-person or third-person perspective. And contrary to modern interpretations of a tribe, your clan is not primitive by any means. Each soldier is capable of handling high-tech weaponry, has a jetpack for flight and can operate futuristic contraptions for a little bit of vehicular combat. It will be interesting to see how well the public accepts the game given the early state of online gaming, but one thing is for sure: This game is proof positive that multiplayer gaming is about to blossom.



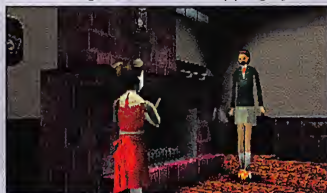
CLOCK TOWER II

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: ascii AVAILABLE: winter

Entertainment is a rare thing in point-and-click games, but the first *Clock Tower* on PlayStation was able to mine more than enough moments of solid, spooky fun with its portrayal of a malevolent stalker whose tool of death was a giant scissors. In *Clock Tower 2*, the gruesome moments continue to give the series respectable chills: the first image Alyssa, the hapless protagonist who falls into a sea of dark mysteries, sees is a dismembered leg protruding from a toilet surrounded by a trail of yellow blood. This, in the first chapter of three, begins the steady march of body parts, possessions, zombies, and other images of stock horror moments that just manage enough strength to give the game a heart beat. Moving a cursor from one point to the next, finding keys, weapons, and objects to unlock light puzzles is as deep as *CT2* cares to dig, but with a whopping 13 endings that are sequenced depending on how you choose to play through the game's three distinct locations, this is about as good as point-and-click horror tends to get.



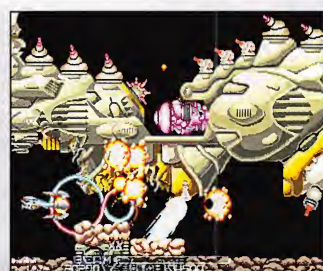
Alyssa: "Wha...what is that?!"



R-TYPES

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: tremlascl AVAILABLE: winter

You know who you are. As a hard-core gamer with memories forever locked in the old-school pantheon, not a day goes by where you don't lament the passage of those great 8- and 16-bit home and arcade shooters – fast-twitch games that required little more than precision reflexes and steady focus. You strive for the classics, and, thankfully, there exist a few companies that are more than happy to capitalize on those fond memories. With a compilation disc called *R-Types*, ASCII is banking on the fact that *R-Type 1* and *2*, the classic arcade shooters from the late 1980s, are more than enough to tame the retro spirits. Offering both shooters with pixel-perfect accuracy, a rumble pack update, and an exhaustive library of game history, *R-Types* is a satisfying fix for the if-it-flashes-on-the-screen-then-shoot-it craving.



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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

WHO'S THE BEST OF THE BEST?

Another year has come and gone in the ever-changing and always-exciting world of video games, and here's the best of it, as voted by the editors here at GR. Rather than confuse things, we threw everything into the mix (PlayStation, Nintendo 64, Saturn, Dreamcast, PC, and imports) and took it to a vote, category by category. Though we almost came to blows a couple of times, I think you'll agree that the preceding games are all the top of the heap. This year's big winner, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, may well be the best game ever produced and should be experienced by anyone with the means to do so.

action/platform

- 1 Banjo/Kazooie NINTENDO N64
2 Medieval 2 SONY PS



fighter

- 1 Virtua Fighter 3:tb SEGA DC
2 Tekken 3 NAMCO PS



action/rpg

- 1 Zelda 64 NINTENDO N64
2 Mystical Ninja KONAMI N64



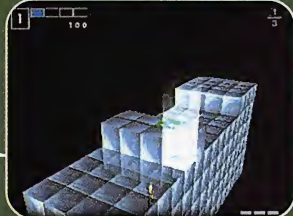
action/adventure

- 1 Metal Gear Solid KONAMI PS
2 Resident Evil 2 CAPCOM PS



puzzle

- 1 Intelligent Qube SONY PS
2 Bust a Move 3 989 STUDIOS PS



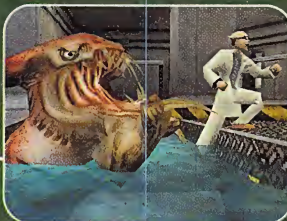
strategy rpg

- 1 Shining Force 3 SEGA SS
2 Final Fantasy Tactics SQUARESOFT PS



fps (action shooter)

- 1 Half-Life SIERRA PC
2 Unreal GT INTERACTIVE PC



real time strategy

- 1 StarCraft BLIZZARD PC
2 Myth 2: Soulblighter BUNGIE PC



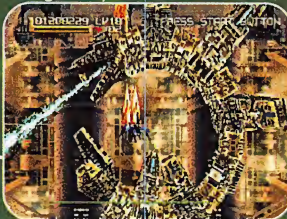
racing

- 1 Gran Turismo SONY PS
2 Ridge Racer R4 NAMCO PS



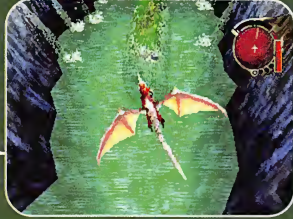
shooter

- 1 Radiant Silvergun TREASURE SS
2 Rogue Squadron LUCASARTS N64/PC



role playing (rpg)

- 1 Panzer Dragoon Saga SEGA SS
2 Xenogears SQUARESOFT PS



combat/fantasy racing

- 1 F-Zero X NINTENDO N64
2 Speedbusters UBISOFT PC



vehicular combat

- 1 Vigilante 8 ACTIVISION PSX/N64
2 Twisted Metal 3 989 PSX



non-categorical

- 1 Bust a Groove ENIX/989 PSX
2 Silicon Valley TAKE 2 N64



most original concept

- 1 Pokémon NINTENDO CGB
2 Destrega KOEI PS



best new character

- 1 Sir Daniel Fortesque—MEDIEVIL SONY
- 2 Banjo—BANJO/KAZOOIE NINTENDO



character of the year

- 1 Link—ZELDA 64 NINTENDO
- 2 Solid Snake—METAL GEAR SOLID KONAMI



best handheld game

- 1 Zelda: Link's Awakening Color NIN. GBC
- 2 WarioLand 2 Color NINTENDO GBC



promotion of the year

- 1 Zelda Scavenger Hunt—ZELDA 64 NINTENDO
- 2 Wild 9 Playboy Play-off—WILD 9 SHINY



letdown of the year

- 1 The Slow, Painful, Premature Death of the Sega Saturn
- 2 Thrill Kill goes unreleased as censorship rears its ugly head



best soundtrack

- 1 Medievil SONY PS
- 2 Zelda 64 NINTENDO N64



best game commercial

- 1 Vigilante 8 ACTIVISION PS
- 2 Gameday '98 SONY PS



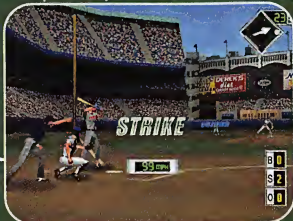
best peripheral

- 1 JogCon NAMCO PS
- 2 Dual Shock SONY PS



baseball

- 1 All Star Baseball '98 ACCLAIM N64
- 2 Triple Play ELECTRONIC ARTS PS



basketball

- 1 NBA Live '99 ELECTRONIC ARTS N64
- 2 NBA In the Zone '99 KONAMI N64



golf

- 1 Tiger Woods Golf EA PSX
- 2 Hot Shots Golf SONY PSX



soccer

- 1 World Cup '98 ELECTRONIC ARTS PC
- 2 ISS KONAMI N64/PS



page 47

end of the year special

system of the year

- 1 Nintendo 64 NINTENDO
- 2 PlayStation SONY



best alternative sports

- 1 1080 Snowboarding NINTENDO N64
- 2 NFL Blitz 64 MIDWAY N64



football

- 1 Madden 64 ELECTRONIC ARTS N64
- 2 Gameday '98 989 PS



hockey

- 1 NHL '99 ELECTRONIC ARTS PC
- 2 Face-off 989 PSX



wrestling

- 1 WCW Revenge THQ N64
- 2 WWF Warzone 64 ACCLAIM N64



NINETEEN NINETY EIGHT

GAMERS' REPUBLIC TOP 10 OF THE YEAR

⚡ dave halverson

Launching Gamers' Republic in the midst of the Nintendo 64 and PlayStation's heyday and then ushering in the Dreamcast at year's end, this has been a year to remember. Besides home console, the GameBoy Color is more reason to celebrate, knowing we can look forward to many more years of quality portable gaming. I also must mention that I couldn't include Sonic Adventure, which had yet to come out at press time. The way I love the little blue guy, you'd have likely seen him in the No. 2 spot. Of course, Sonic will have his chance again next year. Here's my top ten for '98...

- 1 *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* NINTENDO N64
- 2 *Banjo Kazooie* RARE N64
- 3 *Medieval* SONY EUROPE PS
- 4 *Metal Gear Solid* KONAMI PS
- 5 *Spyro the Dragon* INSOMNIAC PS
- 6 *Panzer Dragoon Saga* SEGA SS
- 7 *Mystical Ninja 64* KONAMI N64
- 8 *Klonoa door to Phantomile* NAMCO PS
- 9 *F-Zero X* NINTENDO N64
- 10 *Wild 9* SHINY ENT. PS



⚙️ brady fiechter

Zelda: OoT is a timeless treasure – an enchanting, wonderfully imaginative, beautifully crafted experience that took me places other games only dream of. Playing the game, I felt like I was at the dawn of a new era, experiencing the uncovered gifts of a three-dimensional world, yet bound to the magic of everything I loved about video games of old. The year of '98 will be remembered as a time when a few great games got caught in the ominously rising swell of fledgling 3D technology and mass consumerism. The fortunate gamers were soaked in the rich atmosphere of *Medieval*, the lucky ones found a cinematic experience with *Metal Gear Solid*. The blessed ones played *Zelda*.

- 1 *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* NINTENDO N64
- 2 *Resident Evil 2* CAPCOM PS
- 3 *Medieval* SONY EUROPE PS
- 4 *Metal Gear Solid* KONAMI PS
- 5 *Abe's Exoddus* GT INTERACTIVE PS
- 6 *Tomb Raider III* EIDOS PS
- 7 *Klonoa* NAMCO PS
- 8 *Panzer Dragoon Saga* SEGA SS
- 9 *Spyro the Dragon* INSOMNIAC PS
- 10 *Radiant Silvergun* TREASURE SS



🎮 mike hobbs

Looking back, I knew it was a good year, because coming up with a top ten was a piece of cake. Treasure's *Radiant Silvergun* was simply the best overhead shooter I'd ever played, and *Gran Turismo* brought a new kind of realism to console racing. As the year drew to a close, the one-two punch of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* left me flabbergasted. Then, of course, came the Dreamcast. While *VF3* was a brilliant conversion and *Pen Pen* a hi-res marvel, it was the graphical potential shown by both these games that caused the most excitement. As powerful as PlayStation 2 will undoubtedly be, the DC will hold its own without question.

- 1 *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* NINTENDO N64
- 2 *Metal Gear Solid* KONAMI PS
- 3 *Radiant Silvergun* TREASURE SS
- 4 *Gran Turismo* SONY PS
- 5 *Virtua Fighter 3tb* SEGA DC
- 6 *Ridge Racer Type 4* NAMCO PS
- 7 *Panzer Dragoon Saga* SEGA SS
- 8 *F-Zero X* NINTENDO N64
- 9 *Banjo Kazooie* RARE N64
- 10 *Klonoa door to Phantomile* NAMCO PS



👁️ david hodgeon

A full load of stealth atmosphere with extensive character backgrounds drove *Metal Gear Solid* into seminal game territory; and squads of beautifully animated marines reacting to your every move made *Half-Life* scarily realistic and stunning to play, while the attention to detail in *Gran Turismo* stole the lime-light from Namco's *Ridge Racer* series. Of course, there's nothing like pounding polygonal flesh, and this year pugilists from the Namco and Sega camps strutted their superb motion-captured stuff like never before. Gaming events (like *Zelda*) are what 1998 will be remembered for – developers effectively grappling with 3D environments, and putting AI and attention to detail over flashy visuals.

- 1 *Metal Gear Solid* KONAMI PS
- 2 *Half-Life* SIERRA PC
- 3 *Gran Turismo* SONY PS
- 4 *Tekken 3* NAMCO PS
- 5 *Virtua Fighter 3tb* SEGA DC
- 6 *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* NINTENDO N64
- 7 *Soul Calibur* NAMCO ARCADE
- 8 *Banjo-Kazooie* RARE N64
- 9 *Starcraft* BLIZZARD PC
- 10 *Spikeout* SEGA ARCADE



👁️ dave rees

In the wake of filling the rather large shoes of *Solid Snake* and *Gordon Freeman*, I figured that I was prepared to experience Link's incredible journey... but I was wrong. For three days, I found myself inseparable from my Nintendo 64, gripped by the most absorbing game that I have ever known. *Zelda: OoT* is the best gaming experience I have ever had, and those who miss it will never appreciate just what an incredible closing this year had. But even if *Zelda* were absent this year, I would still categorize the past 365 days of my gaming career as banner. My list speaks for itself.

- 1 *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* NINTENDO N64
- 2 *Metal Gear Solid* KONAMI PS
- 3 *Half-Life* SIERRA PC
- 4 *Resident Evil 2* CAPCOM PS
- 5 *Myth 2* BUNGIE PC
- 6 *Unreal* GT INTERACTIVE PC
- 7 *Sanitarium* ASC PC
- 8 *Xenogears* SQUARESOFT PS
- 9 *Panzer Dragoon Saga* SEGA SS
- 10 *Medieval* SONY PS



🎮 mike griffin

While everybody in America was busy jamming the nails into the Saturn's coffin, I was totally enjoying the system. *Panzer Saga* was a beautiful RPG, and the *Shining Force* Trilogy was a year-long dream come true for an eternal SF fan like myself. *Radiant Silvergun* is the best shooter I've ever played, and one of the best-looking 32-bit titles so far. It should be clear to any gamer with a pulse that *Metal Gear Solid* is a fabulous achievement, and I was totally surprised by *Destrega's* all-new fighting style. I shiver when I think of Dreamcast. Historically, I am and always will be a pure-bred Sega gamer. Finally, *Zelda* is one of the all-time best games.

- 1 *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* NINTENDO N64
- 2 *Panzer Dragoon Saga* SEGA SS
- 3 *Shining Force 3-Pt. 3* SEGA SS
- 4 *Metal Gear Solid* KONAMI PS
- 5 *Grandia* GAME ARTS SS
- 6 *Radiant Silvergun* TREASURE SS
- 7 *VF3tb* SEGA DC
- 8 *Shining Force 3-Pt. 1* SEGA SS
- 9 *Destrega* KOEI PS
- 10 *Vigilante 8* ACTIVISION PS



ryan lockhart

Zelda: Ocarina of Time. The best game I've ever played, really. While I hate to use those kinds of words, there's no other justified way of describing my Zelda experience. The scary part is, even without Miyamoto's instant classic, this was still one of the greatest years videogaming has ever seen. Metal Gear Solid moved video games one step closer to movies in terms of presentation and storyline, Half-Life proved FPS's can be more than just first person shooters, Radiant Silvergun re-defined the shooter genre, and, if you gave the game a chance, Grandia proved FFVII was not the final word in traditional RPGs. Could next year be better? Mmmm... Dreamcast...

- 1 **Zelda: Ocarina of Time** NINTENDO N64
- 2 **Grandia** GAME ARTS SS
- 3 **Metal Gear Solid** KONAMI PS
- 4 **Resident Evil 2** CAPCOM PS
- 5 **Half-Life** SIERRA PC
- 6 **Star Craft** BLIZZARD PC
- 7 **Radiant Silvergun** TREASURE SS
- 8 **Myth 2** BUNGIE PC
- 9 **Klonoa door to Phantomile** NAMCO PS
- 10 **Virtua Fighter 3tb** SEGA DC



brun williams

For me, the very fact that I had the chance to indulge Shigeru Miyamoto's 64-bit Zelda game is enough to justify 1998 as the greatest year yet for video games. Zelda: OoT is the best game I have ever played. Its magnificence overshadowed the usual glut of subpar software titles, but there have been many other A-grade titles. Konami's Metal Gear Solid broke new ground in presentation and atmosphere, Half-Life brought insane AI to the PC forum, Square created Xenogears and Brave Fencer (both superb), and, of course, Sega released the stunning Dreamcast console. 1999 should see Sony announce a new machine and Nintendo following suit. It's going to be one hell of a year.

- 1 **Zelda: Ocarina of Time** NINTENDO N64
- 2 **Metal Gear Solid** KONAMI PS
- 3 **Banjo-Kazooie** RARE N64
- 4 **Medieval** SONY PS
- 5 **F-Zero X** NINTENDO N64
- 6 **Xenogears** SQUARESOFT PS
- 7 **Ridge Racer Type 4** NAMCO PS
- 8 **Gran Turismo** SONY PS
- 9 **Half-Life** SIERRA PC
- 10 **Mystical Ninja 64** KONAMI N64



THE GAME OF THE YEAR

zelda 64: the ocarina of time

NINTENDO N64

Playing *Zelda: the Ocarina of Time* was for me a reaffirmation of what video games are all about and what made me love them so much in the first place many years ago. Nowhere is the human spirit more evident than in Link's latest quest. Growing from a young boy to a teenager with the fate of Hyrule hanging in the balance, Link experiences a wide

range of emotions, and must make countless decisions as to how to go about saving the day. Comparing notes with friends as to how they went about playing the game, one realizes the fantastic range that this game has. It truly is a personal journey for everyone that takes it. Somehow, Miyamoto and his amazing team make the player feel as if he or she has a stake in Link's well being and the final outcome. I genuinely cared about making

Epona my own, rounding up cuccos, and fetching a Goron's prescription in the hopes that I may wield the mighty Big-geron sword.



When I met Princess Zelda and zoomed in on her face, I stared at it for minutes, as I did with the beautiful Gerudo guards. And the first time I visited a fairy, I skipped through the water and gazed at the walls in awe. I seriously didn't want this game to end, as I pondered when I might embark on such a journey again.

Throughout the year we are presented with solid diversions and the occasional gem, but *Zelda: The Ocarina of Time* has once again raised the bar to a level which will likely not be achieved until we journey through Hyrule once again... The staff at GR extend thanks to Shigeru Miyamoto and everyone at Nintendo for the memories. ♪



RUNNER UP: metal gear solid

KONAMI PS

Hideo Kojima's magnum opus has truly opened a new avenue of console gaming that will live long into our future. Melding action and stealth gameplay with a strong

cinematic style that goes untouched, *Metal Gear Solid* delivers an intense emotional experience that has never been had before. The sheer amount of detail in the game, from its technical accomplishments to its brilliant script and production, provides the depth that gamers demand in this modern day and age of gaming. Kojima has truly taken the PlayStation into places that it has never been before. It is this sort of quality effort that keeps our beloved industry in a continual state of evolution. ♪



NINETEEN NINETY EIGHT

INTERVIEW WITH MR. MIYAMOTO

BY GARY HARROD



AFTER WINNING THE RECENT "ZELDA SCAVENGER HUNT," WHICH INVOLVED STRANGELY-DRESSED CHARACTERS AND A TREK AROUND SAN FRAN IN LIMOUSINES, WE WERE GIVEN THE RARE PRIVILEGE OF A FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW WITH THE ONE AND ONLY MR. SHIGERU MIYAMOTO.

Q. DO YOU THINK ZELDA IS YOUR MOST ACCOMPLISHED PROJECT IN TERMS OF BOTH GRAPHICS AND GAMEPLAY?

Every time we get into developing a game, we try to create the best one. This project required each designer to make more effort than ever before. In addition, many designers went beyond their best. I think everybody's effort contributed a lot to the accomplishment that is *Zelda*.

Q. HOW IMPORTANT IS REALISM TO ZELDA 64, AND IN TRYING TO CREATE A MORE REALISTIC ENVIRONMENT, DID IT MAKE IT HARDER TO IMPLEMENT GAMEPLAY?

Realism is really important to *Zelda*. Basically, Link is a kid, and as he grows, he gets more experienced and obtains more tools. Then, gradually, he faces stronger enemies. The player has to use his brain to get over obstacles in the game by combining and utilizing tools that he has obtained. So the feeling of accomplishment is very strong for players when they finish playing through the game. Regarding gameplay, we have always tried to embody the element of the previous *Zelda* series. This time, what

has changed a lot in *Zelda 64* is that we created a sort of miniature garden for *Zelda*, a garden that can be overlooked by us players. While looking over the garden or field, we gradually added to it to make it more enjoyable and make it easier for players to get into the world of *Zelda*. Using the performance of N64, we tried to make a player feel the temperature, the sun, raindrops, and change of



weather within the game. We basically wanted to create a world that the player can feel. In order to create the world that we wanted, the use of 3D was unavoidable.

Q. DO YOU FEEL THAT GAMES ARE INCREASINGLY CROSSING OVER WITH MOVIES AND LITERATURE? HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE CREATIVITY OF A DESIGNER SUCH AS YOURSELF?

Games enjoy a certain duality. In a novel, for example, since everything is written, the reader has to read paragraphs and is required to use his imagination to depict the world or situation in his mind, which means that there are elements which let the reader use his imagination.

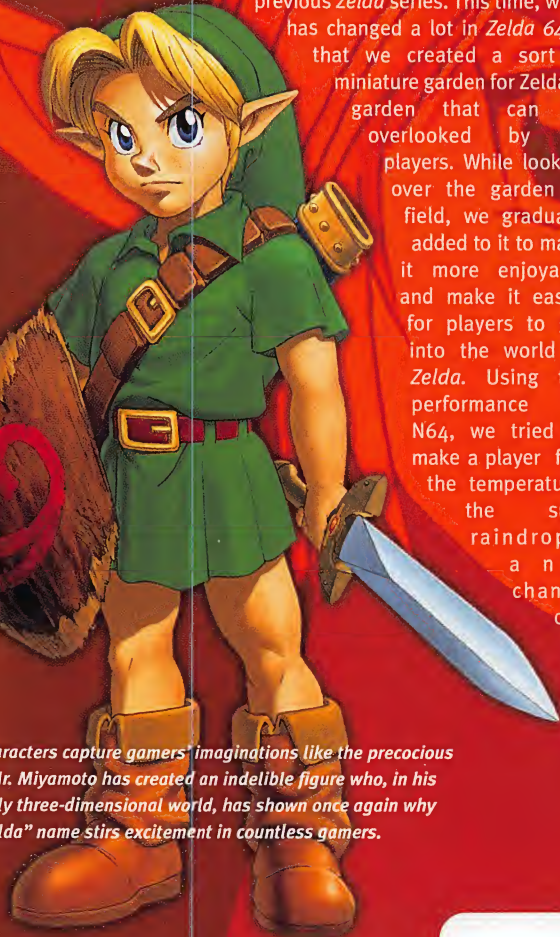
Video games have that element. Like movies, games also become able to express things more objectively to a certain level, so that each player can have common impressions or images. What is important to the game is that we, as creators, have to absorb the good elements from both novels and movies.

I think that game creators should pay attention to the "paragraph" in novels, so to speak. Of course, we always pay attention to this paragraph when we create the games. On the other hand, expressing objectively to please game players takes a lot of time and technical ability. Time is always crucial in the production of games, and since time is limited, we cannot spend too much of it trying to achieve one or two particular things. We think that the core of making games is through interactivity, and we tried to create something that players can touch in the game. Many say that games are becoming more like movies, but we are not creating movies, we just added some elements of movies. By including cinematic elements in a game, we hope to further engross players while playing.

We did not intend to create a movie-like game. By using effective camera work in a real-time world of *Zelda*, the real intention was to add movie-like elements as a part of interactivity. Another thing is that we not only try to follow new trends or use new technology, but also to extend the entertainment by making use of existing technology. In *Zelda*, we tried so many different ways to make use of the controller in order to add a new aspect of gameplay, such as riding a horse running across the field. Also, we are planning to release the Bulky Drive next year in Japan. This program has been made so that you can play another version of *Zelda*.



Few characters capture gamers' imaginations like the precocious Link. Mr. Miyamoto has created an indelible figure who, in his first fully three-dimensional world, has shown once again why the "Zelda" name stirs excitement in countless gamers.



Q. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU COULDN'T ACHIEVE?

Unfortunately, what we didn't achieve this time is that we were unable to connect GB to N64. We look at the current technology and we try to make use of it. That is our concern. It is not that we are simply following the newest technology, but we have to challenge ourselves to make the best out of the existing technology.

Q. WHEN YOU ARE UNABLE TO ACHIEVE A SPECIFIC EFFECT IN YOUR GAMES, DO YOU DISCUSS THESE LIMITATIONS WITH YOUR HARDWARE ENGINEERS?

Well, in our case, game and graphic designers do not have to do programming, but we train them to have at least necessary knowledge in order to communicate with programmers. Accordingly, we can communicate well and get more specific questions or suggestions from the production side. By receiving comments and requests from the production side, we can make a better way of creating games. In a way, those suggestions or questions may lead to a basic prototype of a next generation console.

Q. HAS ANY THIRD-PARTY COMPANY ACHIEVED ANYTHING ON N64 THAT HAS IMPRESSED YOU?

Well, among third parties, I would say Rare. I would even say they have better technology than we have, and I have to compliment Iguana. I understand that more companies are getting accustomed to N64 technology. Not only confined to N64 technology, but also motion capture systems and animation methods are more often used. So it is more necessary for developers to become accustomed to many other developing tools and systems. So I can say that if you are working on N64 and learning a lot from N64 technology, you are now being prepared for creating the future of next generation games.

Q. IS IT MORE OF A CHALLENGE FOR YOU TO CREATE A GAME IN 3D, AND DO YOU THINK IF ZELDA 64 HAD BEEN IN 2D, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS OF A CHALLENGE FOR YOU?

Creating a 3D game was more than ten-fold the fun of making 2D games for me because making virtual 3D worlds is a big project, pain-staking yet challenging. One thing we wanted to avoid, when changing from 2D to 3D, is uncomfortable gameplay. We try to make sure that players can have seamless gameplay. Other than this, I did not have many problems.

Q. FOR PEOPLE WHO ENJOYED ZELDA ON SNES, WHAT WOULD BE THE BEST ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE THEM WHEN THEY START TO EXPERIENCE ZELDA 64?

Well, it can be hard to control perfectly in the 3D environment. But we made this game intuitive, so please be a little patient until you get used to the controls. If you want to just walk around in the field and want to enjoy scenes, it is just fine since I made the game that way. Take your time and enjoy it! Because the game environment is really huge, you might need the help of a strategy guide. However, I have a message for those who read strategy guides. Don't read them until you're stuck in the game. If you read an outline of this game in the guide, you're more likely to get lost. I made this game challenging, but enable you to finally get to the conclusion if you keep trying. Since about one-third of this game is related to non-strategy, relax and enjoy it.

Q. DO YOU THINK 3D IS IN SOME WAYS STILL NEW TO MANY GAME PLAYERS?

Many people are already accustomed to 3D games. However, Nintendo care, and are always thinking about new game players.

Q. WHAT REMAINING 16-BIT SEQUELS MIGHT WE SEE ON THE NINTENDO 64?

Well, *Metroid* [laughs]. Although I am not the *Metroid* producer, whenever I come across the opportunity in a company meeting, I try to suggest it. People are also asking about *Fire Emblem* and *Kirby*. We are making *Mario RPG* and *Mario Paint* at the moment. With our next hardware we will introduce more new titles.

Q. HOW ABOUT WARIO?

He is going to appear in *Mario Party* [a board game] next month. Although we started to make a game in which Wario is the main character, at this point, we cannot tell anyone about it...

Many thanks to Mr. Miyamoto, Mr. Minagawa, Beth Llewellyn, everyone at Nintendo, and the great folks at Golin Harris.

Many call him a genius. And in the scope of video-game creation, such a statement isn't at all an exaggeration. He is an individual who has a passion for his art, and as gamers, we are fortunate to share in his love and vision.



Discounting a Mahjong title that was released in Japan, Winback marks Koei's first real title for the Nintendo 64. Developed by Omega Force (creators of Dynasty Warriors and Destrega), Winback is a 3D action title with vague similarities to Goldeneye and Metal Gear Solid. GR recently sat down with Tatsuya Yazaki (producer) and Tomonori Miyazaki (director) at Koei's Japanese HQ to get the inside scoop on Winback...

GR: How many people are working on the game?

KOEI: In total, there are around 30 people working on this project. The producer, the director, four planners, four programmers, seven CG artists, eight motion designers and four sound engineers.

How did you come up with the name WinBack?

To tell you the truth, when we started development, we had a different name. We originally wanted to call the game "Hard Operation." Someone from our American office said it sounded cool but unfortunately there were some copyright issues tied with the name, so we had to discard that particular notion. Instead, we went for the current title, which is based on the general object of the game – to get back a defense satellite taken over by terrorists.

How big will the game be?

The game is roughly divided into four large areas. These are divided into about 200 locations in total. *WinBack* is different from *Golden*

movies. One of the team members even went to Saipan so that he could practice shooting various guns.

Are all the guns in the game real?

Most of the weapons in the game are based on real-life existing guns. However, we have one gun in the Japanese version, the Colt, which we can't use in America because of its trademark, so we created our own original gun instead. The character is able to use hand guns, a shotgun, a sub-machine gun and wireless explosives, etc., but the bosses get to use missile launchers and flame throwers, etc.

Is it an original 3D engine? How long did it take to develop?

Yes, it's an original program that we developed specifically for *Winback*. The whole game has been in development now for over two years, with the majority of that time, nearly 80 to 90 percent, spent creating just the graphics engine. Although at first its image may appear similar to *Metal Gear Solid* or *Golden Eye*, if you have a go, then it's immediately obvious that



WINBACK

AN INTERVIEW WITH KOEI

Eye and *Mission: Impossible*, where you go from one stage to another depending on the mission objectives. In our game, we have one continuous story, which the character must work through. We've balanced the game so that you can complete it within three hours. But the first time you play it, it will take about six to seven hours.

How many characters are there in the game?

There are 30 members of S.C.A.T. [Strategic Covert Action Team], which is the special operations group that you are a member of, and 20 terrorists who belong to the organization called CRYING LIONS. In addition, there are another four characters.

How did you decide on the character design?

All the designs were done by our own planners. While we didn't have any particular influences, the game's image is very similar to the SWAT teams in America. As such, our hero was loosely based on Keanu Reeve's character from the movie *Speed*.

For the game's design, did you do any special research?

In order to get the SWAT image right, we read a lot of books and watched a lot of videos and

it's much better. We're particularly proud of the character's movement, which is very smooth and realistic. In order to do this we had to create our own special motion engine. It took a lot of time and effort but the results have really paid off.

Could you tell us about the AMS?

AMS stands for "Active Motion System." This program calculates the joining of one motion to another so that they flow together smoothly. In this way the motion is more life-like and realistic. First of all we hired a stuntman who performed all the actions of the characters at our special motion capture studios. We then edited this movement data by hand to create the best possible motion. In total, there are over 1000 different motions just for the game itself, with another 1000 motions for the in-game events as well.

Did you have to create any special compression techniques?

For the CG and model data, we are just using standard compression routines. However, for the vast amount of motion data, the team created its own special compression tool.



Producer Tatsuya Yazaki (left) and director Tomonori Miyazaki (right) talk about Winback.

Does the camera switch from fixed locations, or is it always moving?

Winback is a full 360-degree free-movement game, so the camera has to keep moving to give you the best view possible at all times. It's not fixed like in *Biohazard*, where the backgrounds don't move. It's more like the camera system in *Mario 64*. The camera system is controlled by an intelligent CPU which will calculate the best view at all times. Usually, this is from behind, but there are occasions when it is not. Switching the camera's viewpoint isn't much fun and becomes annoying after a while, so, although the user can swing the camera angle from left to right, we created the camera system so that it wasn't necessary to move the camera yourself in order to play the game.

Is there a close-combat battle system, or are you encouraged to eliminate enemies from a distance?

With the wide range of guns at your disposal, your character is more than capable of shooting enemies at a long distance. However, each weapon has its own range limitations, so that the further away the enemy is, the harder it is to hit him. Obviously, aiming with a rifle is going to be more accurate than with a handgun as well. Close combat is also possible, but since the game is based on gun shooting, if the enemy is too close, your character will kick them back before they shoot. There are no martial art attacks.

Will the stages consist of more indoor or outdoor locations?

Most of the area locations are inside, about 70 to 80 percent. First of all, you are outside, but you must enter various buildings searching for the terrorists. After you have finished inside one building, you then go outside again for a while before you make your way to the next location in another building.

Will you have many cinematic cut scenes to illustrate the story?

There are about 40 special scenes during the game which are used to build up the story. Depending on your progress and what you have discovered, the scenes will be slightly different. There are various branches that take you through the game. Most of it depends on your time. You have to stop the next attack of the defense satellite, so you are working against the clock. Depending on whether you are

Stealthy gameplay comes to the N64 courtesy of Winback. Sneaking is the key to success!



fast or slow, the scenes will alter. In addition, there are three different endings.

Will there be any voices for the characters?

We really wanted to put voices into the game, but we are limited by the capacity of the N64's cartridge size. Recording voices takes up a lot of memory and we are pushing the limits of the 12 Mb cartridge with just the game and graphics, so we don't have anything left for speech. If we were using the 64 DD, then we could do it.

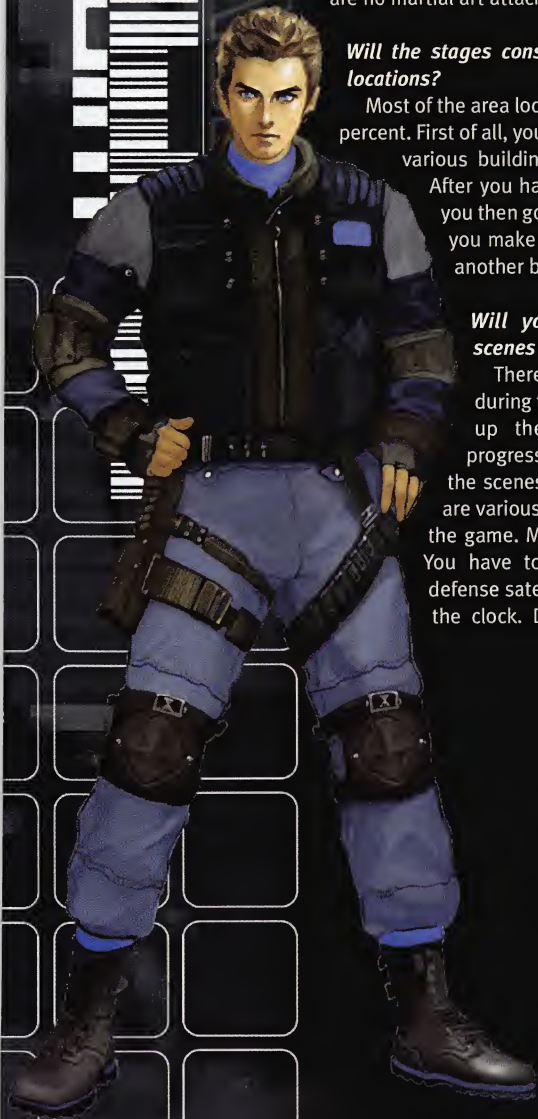
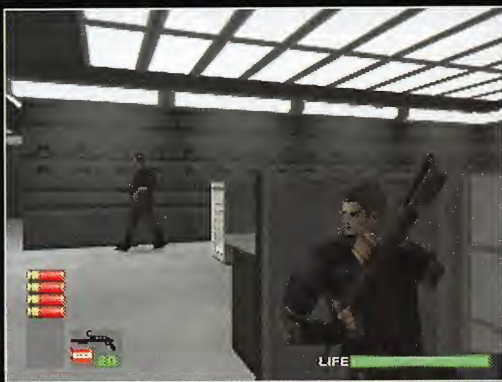
Do you feel the game is oriented more toward American or Japanese users?

We're a Japanese software company, so at first we planned to target the Japanese gamer. But after we announced the game in the U.S. we had such a great response that we are now seriously bearing the American market in mind as we create the game. We think that this kind of game will be readily accepted overseas so we will tune up this version to make it a lot harder for the American release.

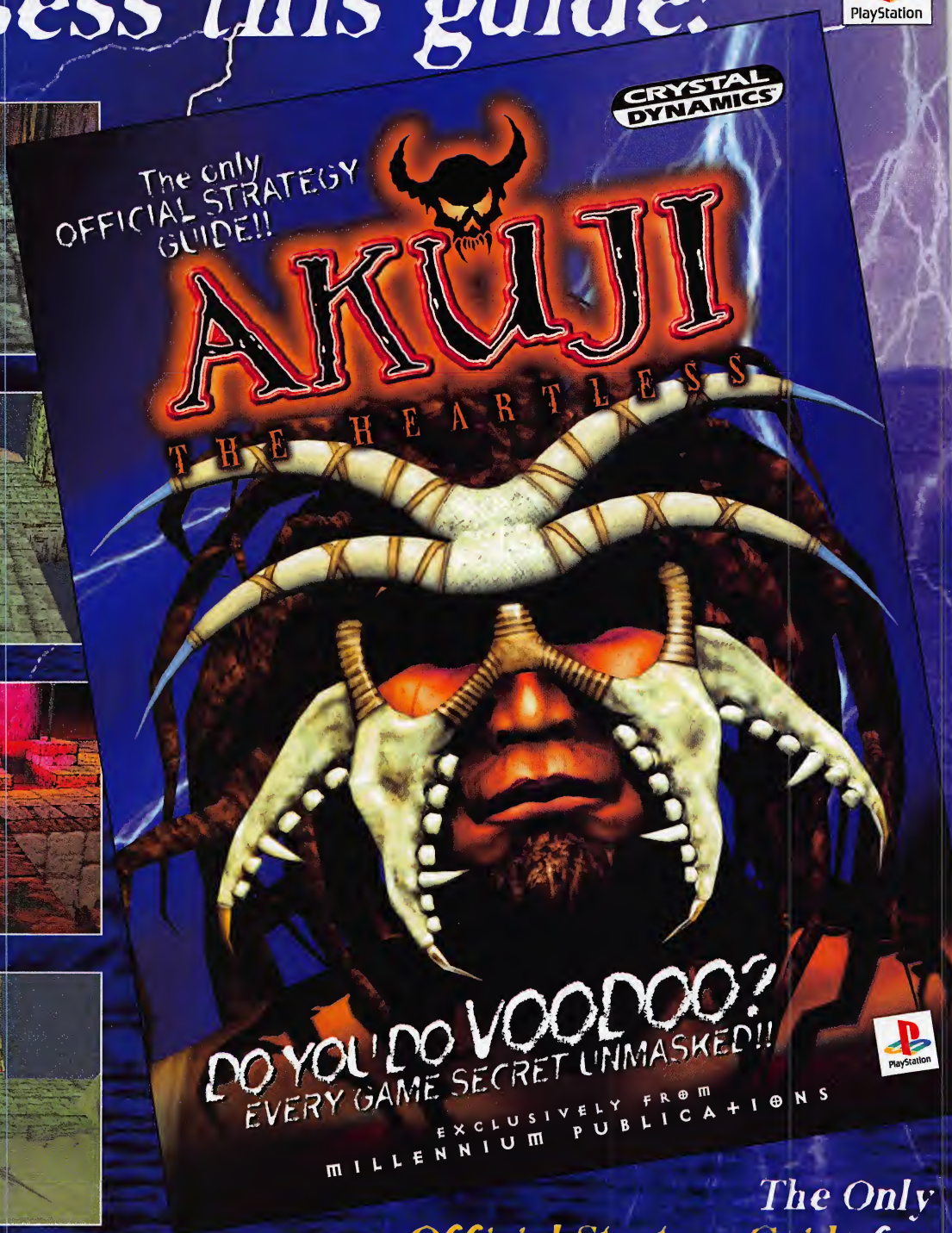
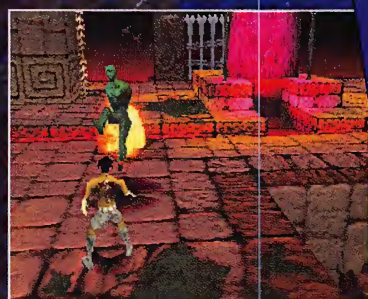
Thank you for your time and good luck with Winback.

Thank you.

Look for Winback to reach our shores in March.



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HERETIC
2



FPS



SHOOTOUT
awards

Four great character-driven 3D action adventures – *Half-Life*, *Sin*, *Blood 2*, and *Heretic 2* – all released in the same month! For those stuck with the decision of choosing just one, we feel for you. Truly a gift to gaming, all four titles are unique, highly entertaining, and well worth the price of admission. But it is inevitable that only one is the *crème de la crème*. That one is indisputably *Half-Life*... ☹



WEAPONS: HALF-LIFE

Half-Life is the only game of the four that relies on the diversity of its weapons to generate a fresh experience both in single-player and multiplayer modes.

LEAD CHARACTER: BLOOD 2

Caleb's dark personality possesses all who dare to play *Blood 2*.

ANIMATION: BLOOD 2

The detailed death animations and overall movements of the creatures are eerily realistic.



AI: HALF-LIFE

This is a no-brainer. Both *Sin* and *Heretic 2* have acceptable AI, but *Half-Life*'s is far more complex. *Blood 2* suffers from a few AI glitches, such as enemies getting stuck on corners and not reacting properly at various times, which keep it well below the rest.

AUDIO: HALF-LIFE

The proprietary DSP that Valve crafted can dynamically manipulate any sound based on environmental changes.



STORY: HALF-LIFE

Although Gordon Freeman never speaks a word, his coworkers narrate everything in real time. Forget about cut-scenes, this is pure immersion.

LEVEL DESIGN: HALF-LIFE

In deathmatch and single-player games, *Half-Life*'s environments edged out *Sin* as the most believable and well structured. Particularly, the sprawling deathmatch maps, such as Lambda Bunker and Bounce, provide great settings for a large number of players.

3D ENGINE: HALF-LIFE

Sin, *Heretic* and *Half-Life* all employ modified versions of id's *Quake 2* engine, while *Blood 2* utilizes the Lithtech engine. They are all great, but, with its advanced rendering, quick loading, advanced AI, and proprietary DSP, *Half-Life* pushes the *Quake 2* technology farther and into more corners than anything else.



BAD GUYS, CREATURES, AND CRITTERS: HALF-LIFE

You name it, it's in there. *Half-Life*'s diverse list of baddies puts the others to shame. Bizarre reptilian aliens, tentacle-laden quadrupeds, helicopters, tanks, Marines, commandos, female assassins, ichthyosaurs, strapping claws, sonic boom puppies, and that mysterious suit wearing villain straight out of X-Files.



CARNAGE & ENTRAILS: TIE - BLOOD 2, HERETIC 2

A category that we had no problem judging. Our hopes for *Half-Life* were high, but to no avail as the final version lacked the arterial spray factor that our demo contained. *Blood 2* is an automatic winner, but *Heretic 2* is just as effective in its portrayal of gratuitously violent death.



WITTY QUIPS AND PROFANITY: BLOOD 2

Caleb has more sayings up his blood-soaked sleeve than all other titles combined. So does the general public around him; they taunt him, make fun of his morbid appearance, and tell him to get lost. They would be much better off if they just shut up.

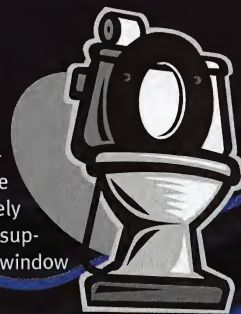


BEST SEVERED HEAD SHOT: HERETIC 2

Corvus tends to lose his mind when facing these pterodactyl-like beasts.

THE POTTY TEST: SIN

Hey, you can flush those toilets! The commodes in *Blood 2* are well modeled, but due to their unsanitary conditions it is not likely that anyone would use them. In *Heretic 2*, I suppose near a tree, behind a wall or out the window would be your best option.



DEATHMATCH: SIN

The two best contenders here are *Sin* and *Half-Life*. While *Half-Life*'s creative take on the frag fest combines the hard-hitting action of *Quake 2* DM with the tense gameplay of *Rainbow Six*, it fails to overcome *Sin* because of frame rate issues.



BEST CROTCH SHOT: SIN

The wicked dominatrix, Elexis, shows her true colors when selecting to play in third person mode in a deathmatch game. Look straight up for a dog's view of Elexis' third most prized possession. Her first two are obvious.



INTERACTIVITY: SIN

In *Sin*, you can actually walk up to computer terminals and execute a program from a DOS prompt, use ATMs, pay phones, and destroy just about everything. *Half-Life* comes close, but does not receive the cigar.

Presenting the **Ultimate** and only **Official** Guide to the video gaming event of the year! Beware of incomplete imitations!

"About ten Metal Gear Solid-related books (guidebooks and more) have been published and sold in Japan. However, there is not a single one that matches the excellence of the guidebook by Millennium. Namely, the taste (artistic sense) oozing from all pages is superb. This is the kind of book we have been waiting for!"

"Each page is elaborately and finely laid out. The level of completion as a guidebook is extremely high. It even incorporates the essence and setting details of Alaska. Its composition as pure reading material is wonderful. And most important of all, it is visually very well polished and sophisticated, leaving us in the development team awestricken."

"As for screenshots, we can tell that the editors made sure they got what they really wanted to show. I could feel the deep love of the editors for Metal Gear Solid. Even the forklift and gun cameras in the game are given extensive explanations. This is what a true guidebook should really do - effectively supplement the game to follow up on details that could not be done in the game itself."

"Above all things, I am extremely touched that this game called Metal Gear Solid, created by a group of Japanese people, is very sincerely dealt with as a piece of art."

"I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the staff who have put together this wonderful guidebook."

"Thank you very much."

Hideo Kojima
Creator and Director of Metal Gear Solid

"[a] terrific... and rather thorough Metal Gear Solid strategy guide [with] clever reading and helpful data. This book has it all."

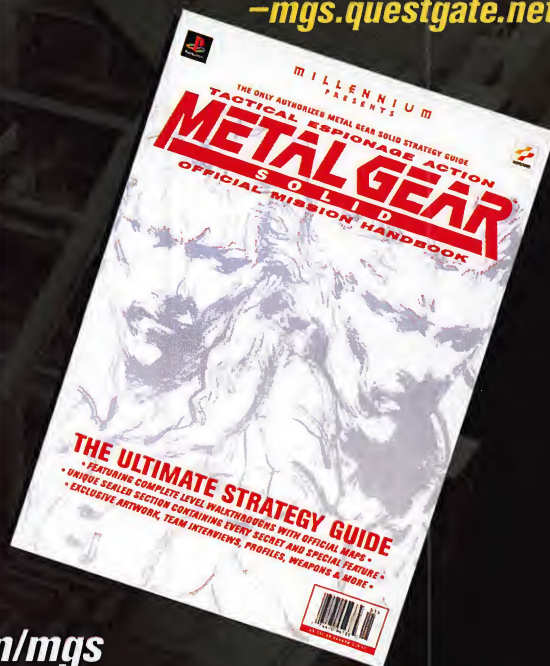
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-metalgear.net

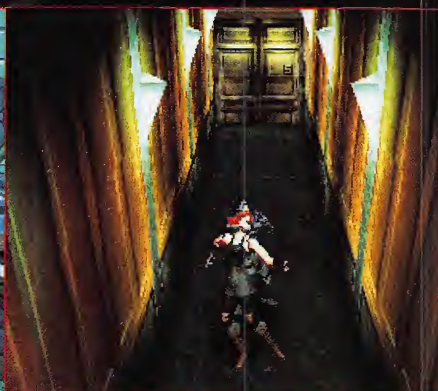
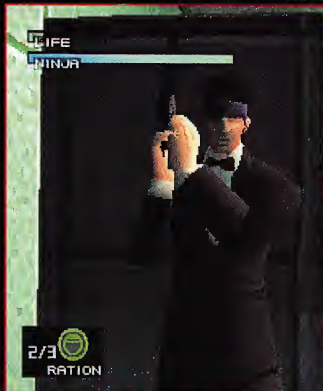
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WHILE THIS MONTH'S ASSORTMENT ISN'T AS MEATY IN TERMS OF QUANTITY, IT MORE THAN MAKES UP FOR IT IN QUALITY. LOOKS LIKE '99 IS GOING TO BEGIN QUITE NICELY. NINTENDO FANS WILL FINALLY TAKE THEIR FIRST JOURNEY THROUGH TRANSYLVANIA, AND WHEN THEY GET TIRED OF SLAYING THE UNDEAD

THEY CAN HOP INTO A MOTOR VEHICLE AND TERRORIZE THEIR FRIENDS. OF COURSE, HALF-LIFE AND GRIM FANDANGO ARE ALREADY OUT, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, IF YOU HAVEN'T BROUGHT THEM HOME YET, NOW'S THE TIME. RACING FANS HAVE GREAT CHOICES AS WELL. AND LARA'S STILL SHAKIN'.



GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

BLOOD 2	B
CASTLEVANIA	B B+ B-
DELTA FORCE	C+
ENEMY ZERO	B-
FALLOUT 2	B+
GRIM FANDANGO	A- A- B
HALF-LIFE	A A A
HERETIC 2	A-
NBA IN THE ZONE 99	B
SIN	B B+ B
SPEED BUSTERS	B
TOMB RAIDER III	A B B
TOP GEAR OVERDRIVE	B C+ C+
TRESPASSER	C-
VIGILANTE 8	B+ B+ B

1. Games marked in **RED** are highly recommended for your gaming collection.

2. Games marked in **BLUE** should be avoided completely.

[Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is a great way to spend your day. Games scoring a low D or F should be microwaved for three seconds and returned.]

[A+ to A] Games in this bracket are the best of the best. They feature the highest quality visual presentation, and are excellent in both initial and long term playability. The very best video game of its type, worthy of every gamer's undivided attention. *Example: Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

[A- to B] Excellent, solid, and highly playable pieces of software, although they lack minor polish to become truly outstanding. Slight frame rate problems, a marginally disappointing ending or any number of small quirks may take an otherwise exalted release down a notch. *Example: Xenogears*

[B- to C] Games in this bracket are generally very good, but may have one or more flaws. A game receiving a B- may be a great game that's just too short or has irritating music, while a C may have these same problems and a couple more. Very good to average entertainment. *Example: Shogo*

[C- to D] Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the final stages of design. *Example: Battletanx*

[D- to F] Very rarely will you come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. *Example: Batman & Robin*



man begs for life from an axe-wielding soul dredge. Chop, chop and chop again; the lack of tangible evidence brings a smile to Caleb's ridged face. His witticism and derogatory remarks, which can be called upon by a keystroke, profoundly state his demeanor. He warns a man with his head impaled on a blade of a working ceiling fan to be careful not to poke his eye out. He makes a humorous reference to

Fear No Evil... Seek Evil... Kill Evil... *Welcome to the contorted mind of Caleb* **BLOOD 2** BY DAVE REES

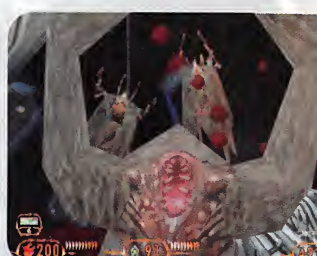
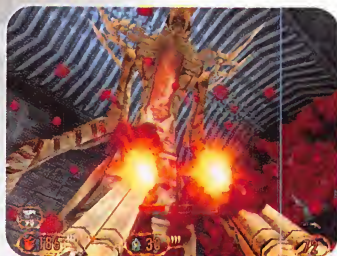
My darkest side rarely rears its ugly head, but after playing *Blood 2*, I

couldn't help but realize just how iniquitous I can be when pushed hard enough. But it's not my fault: I had to assume the role of Caleb – one evil, evil man. He slices pompous pedestrians with his knife and consumes their hearts like organic energy bars. He mows down scientists in the back with a machine gun, and then cuts their remains into tiny bits. He watches with disregard as a defenseless

meatballs when happening upon an oven containing a smoking human body punctured by five forks.

Blood 2's dark humor is its most appealing card, but it is certainly not the only card it has to rely on. The game impressively pairs a gruesome artistic style with the powerful Littech Engine. The result is a very original, engrossing single-player FPS experience. Creepy Gothic moonlit cityscapes and chapels, hideous creatures, subtle yet moving ambient sounds, thumping music, and some very cool weapons and items are all part of the package. But what steals the show is the bucket upon bucket of hemoglobin that floods the screen with each round of ammunition you release into your enemies. At close range, armed with dual shotguns, your adversaries will sometimes explode into a thick shower of... stuff. Does anything really contain this much fluid?

Blood 2 does include a multiplayer bloodbath mode, which is relatively weak compared to current standards and just doesn't compare to the terror-stricken gameplay of the single-player game. It is hard to believe that even Caleb can kill these concoctions without experiencing fear for himself. But he never does. I guess he's used to this kind of thing by now. Unfortunately, so am I. ☹



Cancerous humanoid reproduction, Engineered by Cabalco Inc...

Blood 2 stars a cast of eccentric creatures that show off just how twisted Monolith's art crew is. A deviously minute endoparasite, the bone leech is an agile little annelid that sucks its host's life away and takes control of all bodily functions. Representing the earliest stages of the bone leech's effect on the body, soul drudges are irritable animated corpses that wander about aimlessly, moaning in agony as they wait for their painful metamorphosis to complete. The adolescent drudge lords are terrifying experiments in the fusion of flesh and bone that launch a powerful incendiary attack from long distances. The ultimate form, the repugnant drudge priest, levitates in the air while it rains a swarm of bone leeches and streams bolts of electricity upon its victims. The cycle is thus completed.

■ A DISTURBINGLY ENGROSSING EXPERIENCE
■ BIZARRE CREATURE DESIGN PUSHES BOUNDARIES

■ POOR AI SOMETIMES LESSENS THE CHALLENGE
■ WEAK DEATHMATCH OPTIONS AND MAPS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

MONOLITH HAVE TAKEN THEIR ENGINE INTO THE DARKEST CORNERS OF CALEB'S MIND AND PRODUCED A DISTURBINGLY ENTERTAINING ROMP THROUGH AN EVIL CORPORATE SOCIETY.

B

The Undead Beware...



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MILLENNIUM
PUBLICATIONS INC

Konami's video game institution hits the Nintendo 64... 'Fangs' for the 2D memory... Drac's back in full 3D!

While some 2D purists may turn their noses up at a 3D *Castlevania* offering, others are sure to lap up this valiant puncture at a vampiric rebirth. Your latest attempt to halt Dracula from attempting to quaff down plasma takes place not only in the realm of polygons, but also in the more modern 1850s Wallachia. With only two godly souls braving the castle assault (a chainsaw-wielding fiend and lycanthropic child originally planned as playable lost themselves in memory-and-time-constraints land), we took to the courtyards of the Count with interest...

Character selection is limited to a German whip-wielder going by the name of Reinhardt Schneider, and a small Spanish lass named Carrie Fernandez, who has the power to summon electrical orbs. The quest, torn from the pages of the Necronomicon, had us first thrown into the most intense part of the game – the Forest of Silence. Aside from whistling wind and the distant growling of “animals” (of the lycanthropic kind), the rumble of thunder signified an impres-

sive spattering of rain (which changes direction when you move about). Walking forward, we quite literally vacated our bowels when a shard of lightning tore through a coniferous tree in front of us, and the whole burning structure collapsed at our feet. And then, of course, came the skeletons... The spirit of Ray Harryhausen was conjured exceptionally well as bony bodies pulled themselves up from the ground. As it stumbled towards us, we whipped the first skeleton out of commission and it exploded in a pile of recognizable fragments (no polygon triangles were spotted). As combat progressed, we found that the 3D nature of the combat accurately hearkened back to the action-orientated gameplay of *Dracula X*, but with an added dimension of maneuverability.

Those with previous *Castlevania* knowledge should also be pleased to learn that the basic (and interchangeable) projectile spells are present. This, along with a slide, secondary weapon, and the ability to dodge when the going gets frantic, allows the



schneider



01

carrie

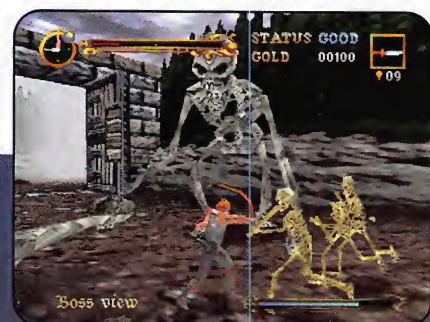


02

malus



03



CASTLEVANIA 64

BY DAVID HODGSON



Only in 1850s Romania can you encounter skeletons on BMW R12 bikes from 1935!

player excellent mobility against critters, which include a giant bone-waving gorilla skeleton, a lit through a maze, chased by what can only be described as Frankenstein's Gardener, various butler types with fangs adrooling, and a large bull demon with a gruesome skin-shedding problem. Puzzles are straightforward but fun, platforming levels (such as the Tower of Sorcery, complete with glistening crystals to land on) are precarious but never tedious, and there are two unique levels for both Schneider and Carrie, forcing a rather entertaining replay. Finally, a meeting with Death or a witch is but a prelude to a battle with Dracula's three forms.

This sounds like a whole lot of fun, and for the most part it is. Aside from the straightforward nature of the game, the draw-in problems of some levels are overshadowed by the variety of monsters and novel (yet sparse) environments. However, the extreme ease of playing the game with Carrie ruins the balance and challenge. Indeed, her main attack is painfully powerful and cheap, enabling game completion in four hours (it is possible to finish off the final form of Dracula far too quickly using an autotarget, her orb, a few thrown crosses and a little prancing). Stick with Schneider, though, and you'll soon be engrossed in a 3D *Castlevania* that doesn't stake (ahem) any claim to its seminal predecessor (*Symphony of the Night*) in terms of enthralling enjoyment, but is still entertaining to play nevertheless. ☺



01.reinhardt schneider | castlevania | KONAMI



■ ACTION, STYLE & MUSIC ARE FAITHFUL TO THE SERIES.
■ DAY TURNS TO NIGHT IN REAL-TIME... VERY COOL.

■ A SHORT BUT ENTERTAINING ACTION/PLATFORMER.
■ A GIRL WITH AN ORB RUINS THE GAME'S BALANCE.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THE SOMETIMES INTRUSIVE DRAW-IN, SHORTNESS AND EASE OF THIS NEW CASTLEVANIA QUEST BLEMISHES AN OTHERWISE IMPRESSIVE EXPERIENCE. STILL RECOMMENDED.

B

悪魔城ドラキュラ

A bold dive deep into the uncharted depths of gameplay...
Valve's premiere title has a lesson to teach us all

HALF-LIFE

BY DAVE REES

H
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Half-Life: Day One, the demo released a couple of months ago, depicted Gordon Freeman's rigorous struggle to escape from the crumbling, booby-trapped Black Mesa Research Facility. But just beyond that, there is hardly time to relax, let alone breathe. It is then that thick tension fills the air when you attempt to escape the pounding slash of three irascible, strapping claws inhabiting a rocket hangar. Eventually, panic strikes when a titanic ichthyosaur in cold, murky waters circles you like an agitated great white shark. Your heart pounds when you desperately attempt to defeat the nimble female assassins; the hurried pace of their footsteps warns of their superior agility. Vertigo overcomes you as you leap across narrow precipices while fending off Marines. Anxiety mounts as you carefully navigate a warehouse lined with a complex matrix of mine triggering lasers; one false move and it is "game over." And when you finally cross into an alternate dimension, a world indigenous to the outlandish denizens you have been fighting along the way, you will be introduced to a unique, magnificent and deadly environment that radiates with bizarre bioluminescence.

More times than I can remember, I lost

all sense of reality while playing *Half-Life*. At one point, my only option was to enter a building by breaking through a vent on the roof that seemed to lead to some sort of drainage system. Jumping into the duct left me no choice but to drag myself through a pipe toward what I hoped was a hatch to safety. I was half right. Unfortunately, a Marine confirmed my suspicion by opening the hatch, throwing something into the pipe, closing the door and running away. Upon realizing that this "gift" was a remote-detonated plastic explosive, I backed up frantically until the explosive ignited. I survived, but before I could breathe a sigh of relief a roaring wall of fire began to accelerate towards me. Panic consumed me again as I chaotically pushed myself rearward through the conduit, falling into a body of water and barely escaping the lethal flames. I then realized that I was now as far away from my PC as possible, with both of my arms stretched as far as they could to reach the mouse and keyboard before me. For a moment, I forgot I was playing a game.

It is this sort of scripting that makes *Half-Life* such an exhilarating experience, and my example is but a grain of sand. The game has many, many high points,





Gordon Freeman's terrifying journey pulls hard on just about every string of emotion. You name it: vertigo, claustrophobia, psychosis, fear, panic, chaos, anticipation, anxiety, adrenaline, shock, alarm, intrigue. Relief only surfaces when you reach the ending, which, by the way, leaves the door wide open for a sequel.

not least of which is its exceptional AI. Facing Marines is the toughest challenge I have encountered in any single-player FPS game. They are so resourceful that you must always assess your situation before alerting them of your presence. Recognize where you can retreat to and what actions you can take if in trouble. Force them to spread out with a grenade, then attack one of the fleeing soldiers in the back with your crowbar. Lure them into a corridor lined with proximity mines. Place plastic explosives close to their bunker without being detected, and detonate it from a safe distance. No matter what the AI throws at you, the game's list of weapons has an answer.

Half-Life's version of the rocket launcher is by far the best of its breed. Once launched, a rocket will follow a red target indicator until impact, allowing you to chase your targets while the rocket is still soaring through the air, sending rockets at targets around corners or even behind you. The game's most original weapon, however, is biological in nature. Snarfs are almost cute-looking critters about the size of a small rodent, but release a group of them in front of an enemy and watch as they hunt him down, leap at him,

and gnaw on his flesh like a herd of rabid rabbits.

This weapon diversity is what makes *Half-Life* deathmatch more of a thinking man's game. There could be a trap waiting around the next corner, a sniper about 300 yards across the courtyard, or your nearest opponent might empty a sac of those pesky snarfs nearby, forcing you to dodge like mad. But deathmatch is where my only complaint enters the picture: the game sometimes suffers from frame-rate problems, even with a T1 connection. Dare I say patch?

Summing up the *Half-Life* experience in mere words is a daunting task. As a single player game, it submerges your senses in a terrifying tale of science-fiction horror, grips your consciousness, sets reality aside, and extends the FPS gaming experience into distant uncharted realms. As a multiplayer game, it offers a slew of fresh approaches to racking up frags, but has a few minor issues to resolve. But overall, *Half-Life* is undoubtedly a benchmark in contemporary game development. It transcends technology. Technical achievements just can't compete with the overwhelming gaming experience that this title provides. Hopefully, other developers will recognize this revelation, and follow suit. ☹

So what does *Half-Life* mean anyway?

All radioactive elements decay over time. The period it takes for one half the atoms of a given sample to disintegrate is its half-life. For example, all organic matter contains a uniform ratio between unstable carbon (C-14) and stable carbon (C-12). Because C-14 decays at a consistent rate with a Half-Life of 5,700 years, scientists can determine when something died by measuring its level of C-14.

■ THIS IS PROOF THAT GAMING IS STILL IN ITS INFANCY
■ INCREDIBLE SCRIPTING PULLS YOU INTO THE ACTION

■ THE MOST INTELLIGENT ENEMIES EVER CONCEIVED
■ FINALLY, TECHNOLOGY IS OUTDOONE BY GAMEPLAY

REPUBLIC SAYS...

A REVOLUTIONARY TITLE IN MANY WAYS, HALF-LIFE MARKS A TURNING POINT IN THE FPS GENRE. TEEMING WITH ACTION AND BRILLIANTLY SCRIPTED... THIS GAME IS A TRIUMPH.

A



If only we could harness the energy emitted by these weapons, the world's energy crisis would be tamed...

HERETIC 2

BY DAVE REES

Cameras, targeting, and control are three aspects of third-person-perspective titles that have been nothing but problematic. For that reason, I could never imagine a fast-paced action game with such a viewpoint. No way... The camera would hinder my view, targeting would be cumbersome, and the protagonist would probably look detached from the world. Well, that is what I used to believe. With *Heretic 2*, Raven have just upped my expectations in a big way.

I knew this game would deliver a deep, brooding, ambient experience. But I never expected a third-person-perspective action game to feel this natural. The camera is highly intelligent; regardless of the viewing angle you choose, it always finds a perfect spot to display Corvus and his surroundings. This allows you to easily focus on timing your hits and changing weapons even while strafing, leaping onto ledges, vaulting across gaps, rolling, back flipping or pole vaulting over your enemies. This is truly a triumph.

At the same time, watching the action transpire is a mesmerizing visual treat that you won't find in any other game. With an enhanced Quake 2 engine, the texture quality, lighting, and particularly the particle effects combine to produce a dazzling show of light that would normally bury a frame rate. Not here. Always hovering between 40 and 60 fps, the action manages to be smoother than life, even causing me to feel nauseous at times.

A refreshing departure from the original, *Heretic 2* also tells a deep story that is presented through dramatic cut scenes depicting Corvus conversing with various key characters. This element adds depth to the gameplay and makes it feel much more like an epic adventure than a mindless limb-slicing festival. Speaking of limb slicing: see page 55 for the game's brutal approach to decapitation.

Altogether, *Heretic 2* manages to be a highly original game even while it rides the same wave as *Half-Life*, *Sin* and *Blood 2*. It doesn't have the most sprawling environments of the lot, but it is an extremely engrossing experience and exceptionally beautiful in its production and presentation. ☺



The Storm Bow unleashes a vicious but temporary storm that rains life-taking blood and strikes lightning upon any nearby enemy.



■ GROUNDBREAKING THIRD-PERSON PERSPECTIVE ACTION
■ CONTROL IS TIGHTER THAN ELEXIS SINCLAIR'S BIKINI

■ CORVUS' PREDICAMENT TRULY INSPIRES THE PLAYER
■ IS THIS REALLY THE DUAKE 2 ENGINE? REALLY?

REPUBLIC SAYS...

HERETIC 2 IS A GAME THAT SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED BY FANS OF 3D ACTION GAMES. THOSE WHO TYPICALLY SHY AWAY FROM A THIRD-PERSON CAMERA WILL TRULY BE SHOCKED.

A-





Duke Nukem 3D rocked the PC gaming world with its OTT action, mature content, identifiable hero and interactive environments based on real-world locations. We've been waiting a long time for a true sequel, and while *Sin* may not be a *Duke Nukem* game in name, it is in spirit (not surprising considering Ritual Entertainment is partially made up of ex-3D Realms employees).

So exit Duke, and enter John Blade, commander of the Hardcorps, a freelance police force in the fictional city of Freeport, 2030. In the process of foiling a bank heist, Blade stumbles across evidence that indicates the robbery is part of a much larger conspiracy, and with the help of his trusty sidekick J.C., he investigates as only he knows how (shoot first, ask questions never).

Sin does so much right it's hard to know where to begin. Powered by a heavily modified version of the *Quake 2* engine, the game both looks and sounds fantastic, with well-designed character models, fluid animation, and exemplary level design that sets a new standard in terms of realism and interactivity. Whether it's a bank, a subway, a missile silo or an oil rig, you'll be amazed at the meticulous attention to detail. If you can see something, chances are you can either use it or blow it up. What you do on one level may affect

what happens on another (Action-Based Outcomes) and there are even vehicles to be driven. The admittedly predictable story unfolds around you as you progress through the levels, and mission objectives are varied enough to keep you on your toes. Despite these innovations, *Sin* is an out-and-out action game, and wears its true colors with pride. While games like *Half-Life* and *Unreal* force you to approach enemy encounters with caution, *Sin* encourages you to charge in with all guns blazing. Blade's arsenal is the genre-standard assortment of shotguns, machine guns and rocket launchers, but implemented with such panache that they are a joy to use; I'll take *Sin*'s generic but satisfying weaponry over *Unreal*'s unique but weedy armory any day. Like *Shogo*, it's simply fun to shoot stuff in *Sin*. Multiplayer is by and large excellent. The DM maps are awesome, and the anatomy-specific damage system lends itself to much more skillful battles, though unfortunately, it doesn't translate so well to net play. ☹



■ INTERACTIVITY THAT SETS A NEW STANDARD
■ TRULY A MODERN-DAY DUKE NUKEM

■ TRADITIONAL YET VERY SATISFYING WEAPONS
■ THERE'S ALREADY A PATCH TO FIX SOME BUGS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

SIN HAS A DYNAMIC ENERGY AND FLAVOR ALL ITS OWN. IN A BANNER YEAR FOR FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS, IT IS A TESTAMENT THAT IT STANDS OUT AS A WORTHY PURCHASE.

B



TOMB RAIDER 3

BY BRADY FIECHTER

*A different time, a different place, a different mission.
But the inimitable Lara Croft marches on*

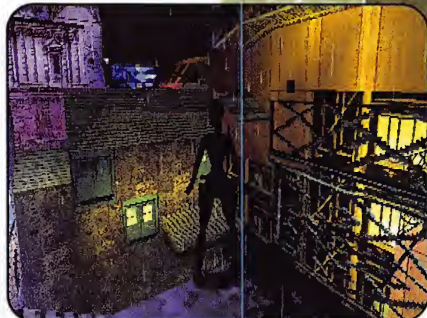
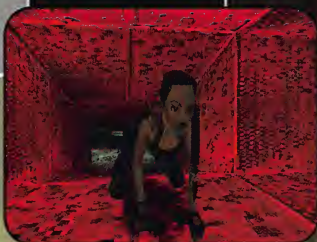
Don't be a tool and pass *Tomb Raider III* off as just another Lara Croft adventure or more of the withering *Tomb Raider* formula. This is the real deal in adventure games.

It is only later, thinking back on *Tomb Raider III*, that I appreciate the full reach of its design. The game contains so many riches that it humbles ordinary games. Take, for example, a jungle scene early on in the game, in which Lara has climbed to vertiginous heights through the canopies of huge, looming trees. After reaching the apex of the jungle setting, a spectacular view opens overlooking a serene pool of shimmering water fed by networks of waterfalls that spill over temple ruins. If you've played *Tomb Raider* in the past, you can relate to the sense of wonder such a trek inspires; few video games treat us to such scenes of immersion.

Through rain-soaked jungle and snow-covered ice caps, across London rooftops and military-base catwalks, Lara finds herself traversing the expanses of the globe in search of artifacts scattered from a centuries-old excavation of a fallen meteorite.

Much more than valuable treasures, these items of profound interest hold answers to genetic questions that transcend all research of human evolution since that of Charles Darwin. The interesting story, which unravels through multiple cut scenes with growing mystery and complexity, draws us further into the game, giving larger meaning and purpose to the intriguing landscapes.

After surviving the spiked pits, poisonous snakes, monkeys and tigers in the opening stretch of land in India, Lara can travel to the Nevada desert and face military forces in the bowels of Area 51; to the South Pacific and deal with belligerent natives and flesh-hungry piranhas swimming the swirling waters; or to an enigmatic London, where furtive passage opens into the shadowy underground. And once the paths have been chosen and the gigantic journey nears its end, Lara must finally brave the harsh climate of Antarctica. As in *TRs* of past, the levels are enormous and intricately designed, requiring the familiar strategies for completion: make the daunting jumps, find the occasional key, flip the switch to



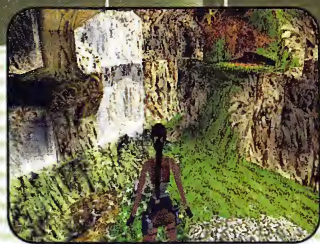
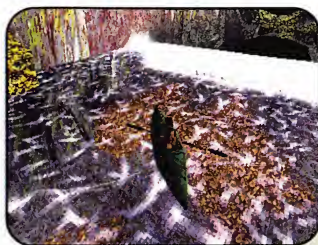
Uncover the secrets of Area 51 and deal with angry natives in the heart of the South Pacific - this gal gets around

gain access to a previously blocked area, avoid sharp objects and boulders, shoot whomever and whatever gets in the way. This could certainly serve as a scripted scenario for many an adventure game, but in *TRIII*, it is infused with uncommon complexity and impact.

Remaining inextricably linked to its vibrant roots, the game is comfortable trading dramatic change for what has made the series a phenomenal success from the beginning - extraordinary design and a soaring sense of adventure. But with the base *Tomb Raider* design covered, the game does slightly expand into more interesting territory, adding new weapons, an assortment of vehicles to maneuver, a dash and monkey swing, and nonlinear exploration. And in a wise move, the constant barrage of enemy attacks that snapped the ambience of *TRII* has been tamed, the emphasis once again firmly placed on the sprawling exploration. By merging these enhancements with a much-improved engine, which is punctuated by rich

lighting and plush, hi-resolution scenery, the game casts its grip with the same ferocity as that of the first *Tomb Raider* experience.

But the game is not perfect. It is crucial, especially in a game like this, to be completely susceptible to suspending our disbelief, to forget about everything that points to a video game and appreciate its understated triumphs. There is always a sense that the immense scope of the game would be better contained in more advanced hardware: When trying to digest the overwhelming complexity and voluminous nature of the environments, the PlayStation struggles with frame rate consistency, textures do break up, glitches do sneak in now and again, and a cynical eye is bound to draw out the blocky, muddled nature of the game. Yes, there is a video game here, and technical limitations are a factor. But the game never lets its absorbing ambience slip away through the cracks of its mistakes. It captured my imagination like few games this year.✴



■ A GAME IN WHICH THE 'ADVENTURE' TAG SAYS IT ALL
■ FANTASTIC MUSIC AND AMBIENT SOUND

■ THE STORY AND CUT SCENES LEAD TO THE APPEAL
■ HI RESOLUTION AND LIGHTING EFFECTS A PLUS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THERE'S NO NEED TO SHIFT THE FOUNDATION THAT HAS MASTERFULLY SUPPORTED THE TWO PREVIOUS ADVENTURES. FOR NOW, THE GAME STILL WORKS ITS WONDER.



SPEED BUSTERS

BY MIKE GRIFFIN

PC racing games tend to take themselves a little too seriously. Sometimes it's good to play an unrealistic, balls-out racing title that's not hiding behind a hopelessly lurid premise. Enter Ubisoft's *Speed Busters*, a free-for-all motorized dash through some of North America's finest vistas.

With an eclectic roster of tricked-out cars ranging from '50s cruisers to modern-day European street racers and exaggerated lay-outs of locations such as backwoods Louisiana and snowy Colorado, *Speed Busters* has a lot of unique variety. The lush polygonal design of the tracks is a testament to the fantasy theme, demonstrated by Mexico's giant Mayan temple and California's Hollywood section (which has a snapping Jaws shark and a lumbering T-Rex). Although a PII 166 with a 3dfx-compatible card will yield very pretty high-res 30-fps action, I've been running *Speed Busters* through a 400 MHz,

twin Voodoo 2 monster PC, pushing the game along at 60 fps in 800 x 600 resolution and beyond. It's the only way to fly. The tracks are wide and fairly complex, and each has a cool shortcut or two. Finally, to complete the mood, *Speed Busters* has high-quality music tracks that mix on the fly depending on the section of the track. In California, you get beach tunes around the beach, dramatic action-movie music through Hollywood, and upbeat Ska-ish stuff on the freeway later. The Mexico track has some classic Mexican horns mixed into a drum-filled fiesta.

I have two major complaints with this game: collision and CPU car A.I. There are some questionably strong road signs, and many objects have boxy collision edges that lead to far too many annoying spinouts. The CPU car A.I. can be unfair, bumping you off the road from behind every chance they can get. The control is a good balance of handbrake drifting and nitro boosts, so there are ways to avoid the cheapness.

If you can deal with these issues, *Speed Busters* is a fun racer. Give it a try. Ubisoft includes a free direct link to their game server for 6-player on-line action, and all-new cars will be downloadable soon – a promising incentive.



high-speed
racing simulation

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SB-AMERICAN HIGHWAYS

SPEED BUSTERS



- FANTASTIC COURSE GRAPHICS AND MODELS
- UNIQUE SHORTCUTS ADD REPLAY VALUE

- STRONG 6-PLAYER GAMEPLAY OPTIONS
- SLIGHTLY ANNOYING COLLISIONS AND A.I.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

SPEED BUSTERS IS YET ANOTHER GORGEOUS UBIOSOFT GAME. THIS TIME THEY'VE FILLED THE GAP BETWEEN THE HARD-CORE RACE SIM AND VEHICULAR COMBAT. GOOD FUN!

B

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Gamers' Republic

COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

online



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GRIM FANDANGO

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: LUCAS ARTS AVAILABLE: NOW

I have great memories of my childhood. So many of them stand out, like the first time I got away with cheating on a school exam, all those times I'd fake a serious illness to stay home and play games, having to retake third grade... Ah, those were happy days. But some of my greatest memories of those care-free afternoons are those that had me plastered in front of my parents' computer, waist deep in LucasArts adventure games: *Maniac Mansion*, *Sam & Max*, *Monkey Island*, and *Indiana Jones: The Temple of Doom* just to name a few. I played each and every one of these classics, and loved them all. Except for *The Dig*, which sucked, but still... Sure, these games were hard and I cheated like a madman whenever the frustration got too high, but the challenge was never the appealing factor for me. Instead, these titles drew me in with their animated characters, beautiful graphics, and well-written dialog—and my favorite of these was one of the last LA adventure games, *Full Throttle*. Tim Schafer, the incredibly talented developer behind both this and another classic, *Day of the Tentacle*, has finally released his third contribution to the world of computer adventure games—and in my humble opinion, it's his best one yet.

I'm sure the basic idea for *Grim Fandango* sounded wacky on paper: a Mexican-influenced crime-noir-style adventure/drama/comedy/mystery featuring papier-mâché skeletons skipping around the Land of the Dead, each of them sporting cool threads, driving classic cars, and smoking cigarettes. Well, there's a bit more than that, and not all of them smoke cigarettes, but work with me here. Manny, our protagonist, is a simple skeleton who's paying his dues by collecting those recently departed. All was slow and well, until he mistakenly tangled himself into a conspiracy that lead him through a point-and-click adventure full of danger, suspense, humor, and everything else we expect from a cool LA game. Without giving away too much, the compelling storyline is a bit reminiscent of *Chinatown*, except for the giant cat and the lack of water. The dialog, of course, is excellently written, the soundtrack is groovy, and the new engine is sharp. If you don't mind stumbling through a few thousand mind-numbing puzzles, I couldn't recommend this title more to adventure game fans—or anyone else, for that matter... ☺

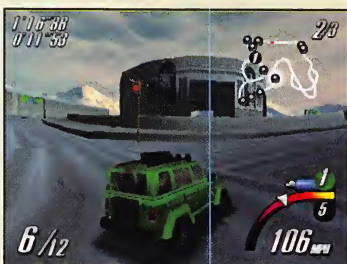


TOP GEAR OVERDRIVE

DEVELOPER: BOSS PUBLISHER: KEMCO AVAILABLE: NOW

Kemco's *Top Gear Overdrive* has a lot going for it—namely the fact that it uses the Ram Pak for the utmost visual effect, and there is limited (at best) formidable competition currently available for the system. Being a straight arcade-style racer (sans attacks and imaginary vehicles or terrain), *TGO* has few competitors. The original *Top Gear* was the first reason for rally fans to celebrate their N64 ownership, and now *TGO* is reason for equal jubilation. Graphically, the game features the same crisp, clear graphics offered in *Top Gear Rally*, only Boss Studios have actually taken things a step further, adding even more detail and some truly spectacular trackside scenery. The snow-capped mountains in the background of "Snow Peaks," for instance, are wholly polygonal, resulting in impressive vistas as you negotiate the icy terrain, which exhibits convincing fridgidity throughout. All of the game's terrain is represented similarly, producing the utmost visual splendor an N64 racer can deliver. In the control department, things are much the same as they were in *TGR*—another very good thing. Delicate steering coupled with precision power slides are still key elements, and the cars, of which there are six (plus an array of silly hidden ones), are modeled brilliantly, even more-so than *TGR*'s. From the frisky New Bug to the stalwart Range Rover, each handles as it should for its respective physical attributes. The most surprising aspect of *TGO*, however (and a complete departure from *TGR*), is the music. Where *TGR* featured a timid treble-fest of 16-bit oinks and squeaks, *TGO* features a robust grunge score that sounds like it was lifted directly out of a scene from EA's *Road Rash*, complete with vocals! I don't know how they crammed it all in there, but it's undeniably impressive.

With all of the depth and replayability of its predecessor in tow, as well as some key features it never had, *Top Gear Overdrive* is everything a sequel should be and is a recommended purchase for N64 racing fans everywhere. ⚡



B NINTENDO 64

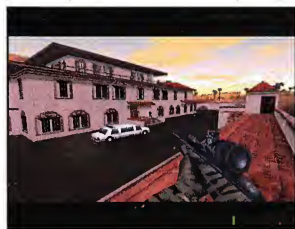
DELTA FORCE

DEVELOPER: NOVA LOGIC PUBLISHER: NOVA LOGIC AVAILABLE: NOW

Delta Force cannot avoid comparison to *Rainbow Six* at a glance, but don't be too quick to judge: This game is very unique in both technology and gameplay. First, in this wonderful day and age of 3D acceleration, the engine is not by any means traditional: it uses voxel technology to draw the terrain and polygons to render the characters (the opposite of what Westwood are doing with *Lands of Lore II*). I'm not so sure this is a good thing, as this combination tends to give the terrain a bizarre appearance at times, and the characters often seem detached from the world.

PG
CD
ROM

C+



But appearances can be set aside. *Delta Force* has plenty of depth and variety in its missions, which ends up being its greatest asset. Unlike *Rainbow Six*, the Special Forces you control are more versatile and the missions more varied. You'll have to tackle five completely unique campaigns, each with a separate objective and nemesis. Dealing with drug czars and insurrectionists as well as those pesky terrorists tends to spice things up a bit. But most important, because of the vastness and high visibility of the environments and the scope of your objectives, you almost feel like you are participating in a war. While I enjoyed *Rainbow Six* quite a bit more, this game still has its merits for the die-hard special ops nut.

FALLOUT 2

DEVELOPER: BLACK ISLE PUBLISHER: INTERPLAY AVAILABLE: NOW

Fallout 2 looks and plays identically to its predecessor, but that fact does nothing but help its entertainment value. Eighty years beyond the plight of the Wanderer, the game portrays a world that has hardly changed. The Earth is still a barren desert littered with the remnants of past lives and populated by mutated descendants of a select group of Earth's creatures. Cars lie in heaps throughout the land, motorized travel is still unheard of, and humanity is still an ancient concept buried deep in the annals of history. Bandits, thieves, slavers and caravans can be seen traveling between various cities.

PG
CD
ROM

B+



But over the past eight decades, with the aid of a GECK (Garden of Eden Creation Kit), some utopias have formed. Walled, highly guarded, and relatively civilized communities now form pockets of Heaven in a ferocious Hell. As a direct descendent of the Wanderer, it is your destiny to venture into the harsh outer world and retrieve a GECK to transform your own fading town into such a paradise. Throughout your journey, you'll meet a few friends, plenty of enemies, and even some prostitutes if you wish. Nothing new here, but certainly nothing bad either. Oh yeah, adults only.

ENEMY ZERO

DEVELOPER: WARP PUBLISHER: SEGA AVAILABLE: NOW

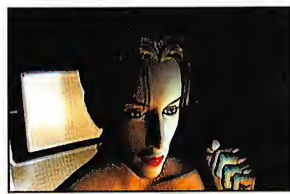
Envision a matrix of dark, narrow, metallic hallways. There is something terrifying lurking within them, but you can't see it. You have no idea what it looks like, how it attacks, or what makes it tick. But, with the use of a motion detector, you can hear it.

Ping, ping, ping... You can tell when it is to your left. Ping, ping, ping... It just crossed to your right. Ping, ping, ping... It is now in front of you. It must be looking right at you. Ping, PING, PING! As it closes the distance between you and itself, the pings begin to resonate from your sensor like mad and the fear overcomes your senses. No, this game is not based on a Ridley Scott film, it is Sega's *Enemy Zero* for the PC.

Initially slated for release on the PlayStation and announced as an exclusive for the Saturn at a PlayStation conference in Japan (Kenji Eno has big balls), the game has finally made its way onto the PC. The creepy corridor scenes certainly benefit from 3D acceleration, but the poor quality of the FMV is almost unbearably grainy. Anyone searching for a fearful cinematic adventure, however, will likely enjoy this game.

PG
CD
ROM

B-



TRESPASSER

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: DREAMWORKS AVAILABLE: NOW

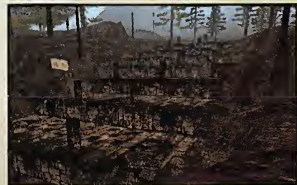
I wish I had a time machine. Not to get rich by playing the stock market or anything; my cause would be much more noble than that: I'd use it to visit the *Trespasser* team two years ago, and beg them to hold off with this game.

Don't get me wrong. I liked *Trespasser* – for the most part. From the first scene on the beach to the final confrontation on the mountaintop, this title delivers a gameplaying experience that, without a doubt, is one of the most immersing and enjoyable I've ever had. That is, of course, when the sometimes horrid frame rate isn't turning the game into a frustrating slide show.

I can look past the Novocaine-infused arm, the sometimes-annoying physics puzzles. I can even ignore the bugs and often ugly graphics, but the fact I couldn't find a computer on God's green earth on which to play *Trespasser* without it chugging is almost unforgivable. The ideas are great. I love the dinosaur AI, and the locations are diverse and well designed, yet little of this matters to most of us when we can't even play the game at a decent speed. I commend this team on its accomplishments on the hardware it had to work with, but it's more than apparent that computers today aren't powerful enough to deliver the experience DreamWorks were aiming for. Hopefully we'll see a re-release when the time is right, but for now I'd recommend buyers – especially ones that are looking for a fast-paced shooter – to stay far away.

PG
CD
ROM

C-





COUNTER + POINT



Castlevania • Konami • Kobe • Konami

As Reviewed By: David Hodgson (page 60)

THE SOMETIMES-INTRUSIVE DRAW-IN AND SHORTNESS AND EASE OF THIS NEW CASTLEVANIA QUEST BLEMISH AN OTHERWISE IMPRESSIVE EXPERIENCE. STILL RECOMMENDED.



- HAUNTING MELODIES AND DAUNTING FANGED MANIACS; CLEVER PLOT TWISTS AND NON-REPETITIVE GAMEPLAY.
- IN-CART SAVE POINTS WISELY PLACED; HUGE BOSSES PROVIDE SOME GREAT SCARES!

Dave Halverson:

B+

WHILE RIPPING CASTLEVANIA FROM ITS 2D ROOTS IS STILL TABOO IN MY BOOK, KONAMI'S KOBE SQUAD HAVE DONE A FINE JOB OF TAKING ALL OF THAT 2D SPLENDOR AND TURNING IT 180 DEGREES. FROM THE OUTER SANCTUM'S MUD AND MIRE TO THE DETAILED HALLWAYS AND DANK KEEPS OF THE CASTLE, CV 64 EXHIBITS ALL THAT IS CASTLEVANIA, FROM THE VAMPIRIC TO THE PLATFORM SAVVY. MY ONLY REAL GRIPE IS THAT SCHNEIDER IS A TAD STIFF IN THE MOTION DEPARTMENT AND THE GAME IS A BIT SHORT IN COMPARISON TO THE EXALTED SOTN. CARRIE, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS A JOYFUL CHARACTER TO BEHOLD AND THE GAME IS MARKEDLY DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON THE CHARACTER YOU CHOOSE, SO ONE CAN ARGUE THAT IT'S PLENTY LONG. THE SOUNDTRACK, THOUGH SPARSE, IS GREAT STUFF AS WELL. A MUST-OWN N64 GAME.



- CASTLEVANIA IN 3D WILL GET BETTER AND BETTER AS HARDWARE PERMITS. THE N64 DOES A GOOD JOB FOR NOW. ENVIRONMENTS NEED MORE COMPLEXITY, THOUGH.
- SHORT-LIVED GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE, BUT SOLID.

Mike Griffin:

B-

WHEN A 2D SERIES AS LEGENDARY AS CASTLEVANIA RECEIVES A 3D FACELIFT, LONG-TIME FANS ARE BOUND TO SCRUTINIZE THE TITLE TO NO END. WELL, CASTLEVANIA 64 IS MORE THAN A FACELIFT FOR THE SERIES; IT'S A WHOLE-SOME DERIVATIVE. IN OTHER WORDS, AFTER PLAYING THROUGH THIS C64, I CAN SAFELY SAY THAT IT'S A GOOD N64 ACTION GAME, BUT IT'S NOT EXACTLY THE EPIC CASTLEVANIA EXPERIENCE WE'VE COME TO EXPECT AND LOVE. REINHARDT AND CARRIE HAVE QUESTS FILLED WITH PLENTY OF UNDEAD CARNAGE, PLATFORMING, AND MINOR PUZZLE ELEMENTS, BUT NEITHER LAST BEYOND 8 TO 10 HOURS. THE CONTROLS ARE GOOD BUT A LITTLE FLOATY. AESTHETICALLY, THIS GAME IS A STRONG N64 TITLE (GREAT SOUND!), AND THE ATTRACTIVE FOREBODING THEME IS INTACT.



Grim Fandango • Lucas Arts • Lucas Arts

As Reviewed By: Ryan Lockhart (page 70)



IN NEARLY EVERY ASPECT, GRIM FANDANGO IS LUCAS ARTS' GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN TERMS OF ADVENTURE GAMES. EVERYTHING FROM THE MOTIF TO THE MUSIC DRIPS WITH PERSONALITY, AND THE WRITING AND VOICE ACTING IS TOP NOTCH. I TRULY WISH GAMES LIKE THESE WEREN'T SUCH A RARE OCCURRENCE...



- EASILY THE MOST CREATIVE GAME OF THE YEAR, THE MOTIF IS ONE NEVER BEFORE ADDRESSED AND ONE THAT YOU WILL LIKELY NEVER FORGET.
- SO FINELY PRODUCED IT'S ALMOST SCARY. REMARKABLE.

Dave Halverson:

A-

ON THE CREATIVITY SCALE, GRIM FANDANGO ROCKETS DIRECTLY TO THE TOP, WITH A CAST OF CHARACTERS THAT DESERVE A LIFE FAR BEYOND THE REACHES OF A VIDEO GAME. THE "DAY OF THE DEAD" MOTIF IS SPECTACULARLY DISPLAYED, AS THIS GAME IS WRAPPED IN UNFORGETTABLE VISUAL BLISS. AS MANNY CALVERA, A TRAVEL AGENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEATH, IT'S YOUR JOB TO UNRAVEL A CONSPIRACY SO COMPLEX THAT EVEN THE MOST SEASONED GAMER WILL FIND HIMSELF WHOLLY SUBMERGED, OFTEN TOTALLY PERPLEXED AND, ABOVE ALL, THOROUGHLY ENTERTAINED. ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL AND ENTERTAINING PC GAMES I HAVE EVER PLAYED, I JUST PRAY THAT THE DIFFICULTY DOESN'T IMPEDE ITS DESIRABILITY. WE SHOULD HAVE DONE A GUIDE ON THIS ONE!



- GREAT TECHNOLOGY, A HIGHLY ORIGINAL SETTING AND AN ENGROSSING STORY MAKE THIS GAME ADDICTIVE, BUT...
- THE SAME MIND-WARPING PUZZLES THAT BRING ABOUT FITS OF RAGE AND MOMENTARY LAPSES OF REASON ARE BACK!

Dave Rees:

B

JUST AS I EXPECTED, LUCASARTS HAVE LIVED UP TO THEIR REPUTATION WITH GRIM FANDANGO IN A BIG WAY. MANNY MAY BE AS DEAD AS A DOOR NAIL, BUT HE STILL MANAGES TO RETAIN ENOUGH WIT AND CHARM IN HIS BRITTLE LITTLE BONES TO BE A HIGHLY ENTERTAINING PROTAGONIST. PRESENTING YET ANOTHER ORIGINAL AND CLEVER ALTERNATE UNIVERSE THAT CONVINCINGLY REVEALS A BIZARRE TAKE ON THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH, THIS GAME IS CURIOUSLY ENGROSSING. THE SCRIPT IS EXCELLENT, LOADED WITH HUMOR AND CLEVER METAPHORS THAT ADD SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE GAME'S APPEAL; HOWEVER, IN LINE WITH EVERY OTHER LUCAS ARTS GAME, THE PUZZLES SOMETIMES CAUSED ME TO WALK AWAY, FURIOUSLY FRUSTRATED. BUT I MUST CONFESS: I ALWAYS WENT BACK.



Half-Life • Valve • Sierra

As Reviewed By: Dave Rees (page 62)



A REVOLUTIONARY EXAMPLE OF HOW CURRENT TECHNOLOGY HAS MUCH UNTAPPED POTENTIAL, HALF-LIFE MARKS A MILESTONE IN THE EVOLUTION OF FPS GAMING. BRILLIANTLY SCRIPTED AND PRODUCED, THE GAME GRIPS YOU LIKE NO OTHER HAS BEFORE. IT IS SCARY TO THINK THAT THIS IS VALVE'S FIRST GAME EVER. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE NEXT?

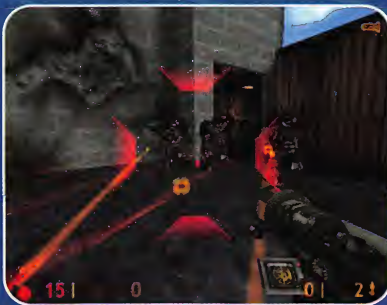


- ANYONE WHO'S EVER WANTED TO LIVE A GREAT SCI-FI/ACTION MOVIE, THIS GAME'S FOR YOU.
- THE SOLDIERS ARE SO FUN TO FIGHT AGAINST, YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF REPLAYING FOR THAT REASON ALONE.

Ryan Lockhart:

A

MY GOD, I ONLY HAVE ONE HUNDRED WORDS TO TALK ABOUT HALF-LIFE... AND I JUST WASTED TWENTY OF THEM. CRAP. OK, THE SHORT VERSION: BUY THIS GAME. HALF-LIFE ISN'T A FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER, IT'S AN EXPERIENCE. EVERYTHING FROM THE FANTASTIC STORY TO THE FRIGHTENINGLY REALISTIC ENEMY AI WILL THROW YOU INTO A WORLD SO VIVID, SO REAL, YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF PAUSING THE GAME AT TIMES JUST TO REFLECT ON WHAT JUST HAPPENED. THE MEMORIES I HAVE: THE PATTERNING OF FEET AS THE FEMALE ASSASSINS MOVE IN AROUND ME, THE SOLDIERS TALKING SMACK AS A GRENADE FLIES ABOVE MY HEAD, ALL OF THE SCRIPTED SCENES... HALF-LIFE IS NOT ONLY THE BEST FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER I'VE EVER PLAYED, IT MIGHT BE THE GREATEST SINGLE-PLAYER PC GAME IN ANY CATEGORY. AND THAT'S SAYING A LOT.



- STUNNING AND GROUNDBREAKING IN EVERY POSSIBLE AREA. AND IT DOESN'T USE THE UNREAL ENGINE!
- MULTIPLAYER MODE LACKS IN COMPARISON BUT STILL VERY SOLID AND GREAT FUN.

Garry Harrod:

A

SO MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID ABOUT HALF-LIFE. IT CLEARLY DESERVES OUR HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION WITH SUCH AMAZING GRAPHICS, STORY, AI AND OTHER ELEMENTS THAT GO FAR BEYOND THE NORM TODAY WITH RESPECT TO FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS. UNTIL THIS MOMENT YOU COULD EASILY MISTAKE THE CORRIDOR GENRE AS A STALE, UNEVENTFUL CATEGORY WITH MINDLESS, KILL-FOR-NO-REASON SCENARIOS THAT LIVED SOLELY FOR MULTIPLAY. VALVE HAVE CHANGED ALL OF THAT WITH A UNIQUELY ENGAGING SINGLE-PLAYER EXPERIENCE THAT WILL SET A MILESTONE IN THIS CATEGORY. TAKE EVERY CLICHÉ PHRASE USED TO DESCRIBE THE BIG BLOCKBUSTER MOVIES LIKE "ROLLERCOASTER RIDE" AND "THRILL OF A LIFETIME" AND APPLY THEM TO HALF-LIFE AND IT STILL DOES NOT DO THIS GAME JUSTICE. HINT: BUY IT FAST!



Sin•Ritual•activation

As Reviewed By: Ramala [page 65]

Overall, I really enjoyed Sin. Though it's not without its flaws (make sure you get the latest patch!), it has a dynamic energy and flavor all its own. In a banner year for first person shooters, it is testament that Sin stands out as a worthy purchase.



- RITUAL HAVE MOLDED THE QUAKE 2 ENGINE INTO A POWERFUL, HIGHLY INTERACTIVE RENDERING MACHINE.
- SIN IS AN INTENSE ACTION TITLE THAT IS VERY HARD TO STOP PLAYING ONCE YOU START.

Dave Rees:

B+

ROUNDING OUT THE ONSLAUGHT OF FPS TITLES THIS YEAR'S END, SIN IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF ALMOST EVERYTHING DONE RIGHT. I LOVE THE ACTION HERO ATMOSPHERE IT EXUDES. JOHN BLADE IS TRULY A GOOD GUY FIGHTING FOR THE NOBLE CAUSE OF JUSTICE, BUT HE IS ALSO MEAN-TEMPERED — ONE WHO WON'T THINK TWICE BEFORE TAKING SOMEONE'S LIFE TO SAVE HIS OWN. SIN IS CHOCK FULL OF GREAT PUZZLES AND INTENSE ACTION THAT KEEPS THE PACE EXTREMELY HIGH, BUT ALSO DRAWS ITS PLAYERS INTO A DEEP STORYLINE. THE END PRODUCT DID SEEM A LITTLE RUSHED, AS IT WAS RELEASED WITH A FEW BUGS AND A SERIOUS LOADING ISSUE, BUT A PATCH IS ALREADY BEING DISTRIBUTED THAT RECTIFIES THE PROBLEM ENTIRELY. AWESOME STUFF.



- SIN IS A GREAT FAST-PACED ACTION GAME, AND IS EASILY ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST...
- ...ALTHOUGH IT FAILS TO COMPARE TO HALF-LIFE IN TERMS OF STORYLINE AND OVERALL IMMERSION.

Ryan Lockhart:

B

I ENJOYED SIN A LOT. SURE, IT'S NOT QUITE THE SINGLE-PLAYER EXPERIENCE THAT HALF-LIFE WAS, AS IT INSTEAD CONCENTRATES ON FAST-PACED ACTION AND MULTIPLAYER MADNESS RATHER THAN THROWING YOU INTO AN INTERACTIVE MOVIE. MUCH LIKE QUAKE II, SIN URGES YOU TO BURST INTO ROOMS WITH YOUR GUNS BLAZING, TAKING DOWN ANYTHING THAT MOVES. LEAPING ACROSS GAPS BETWEEN BUILDINGS, SPRAYING ENEMY CROWDS WITH YOUR MACHINE GUN WHILE TRYING TO DODGE THE TRACER BULLETS THAT COME HURLING BACK — SIN GIVES YOU SUCH AN ADRENALINE RUSH WHILE PLAYING. OVERALL, THIS GAME FEELS GOOD, LOOKS GOOD, HAS GREAT LEVEL DESIGN, AND ASIDE FROM THE INCREDIBLY ANNOYING PRATTLE FROM YOUR "PARTNER," HAS A DECENT STORYLINE. GREAT, ALBEIT RATHER MINDLESS FUN...



Tomb Raider 3•core•eidos

As Reviewed By: Brady Flechter [page 66]

THERE'S NO NEED TO SHIFT THE FOUNDATION THAT HAS MASTERFULLY SUPPORTED THE TWO PREVIOUS ADVENTURES. FOR NOW, THE GAME STILL WORKS ITS WONDER.



- TR RETURNS TO ITS ROOTS, PLACING THE EMPHASIS ON VAST ENVIRONMENTS AND EXPLORATION.
- UNFORTUNATELY THE NEW DESIGNERS HAVE BUILT THE GAME IN SUCH A WAY THAT FRUSTRATION ENSUES.

Dave Halverson:

B

AH, THE JOYS OF TOMB RAIDER... THE FLUID FEMALE FORM OF LARA CROFT DELICATELY PRANCING ACROSS TREACHEROUS LANDSCAPES, BLOWING EVERYTHING IN HER PATH TO SMITHEREENS, ALL THE WHILE KEEPING THE UTMOST POISE AND COOL WHILE NOT QUITE ON PAR WITH THE ORIGINAL YET BETTER THAN TR2, TR3 IS STILL A TRIUMPH. I'LL ALWAYS LOVE THE FIRST FOR ITS TREND-SETTING SIGNIFICANCE, AND TR3 MIRRORS IT IN TERMS OF DESIGN BUT WITH BETTER EFFECTS AND ANIMATION. HOWEVER, THE ANNOYING SQUARES INHERENT OF THE ENGINE, COUPLED WITH THE COMPLEX TEXTURE MAPS, OFTEN CAUSE FRUSTRATION; OTHERWISE, BRAVO. ONE CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT LARA WILL LOOK LIKE ON THE DREAMCAST. CORE HAVE SET THE STAGE YET AGAIN.



- THE THIRD TIME IS DEFINITELY A CHARM, AND AS A HUGE FAN OF THE ORIGINAL, I FOUND THIS GAME ENJOYABLE.
- DON'T EXPECT TO BE BLOWN AWAY. TOMB RAIDER III HAS THAT EXPANSION FEEL AND FAILS TO BE HIGHLY ORIGINAL.

Dave Rees:

B

TOMB RAIDER III'S GEOMETRY ENGINE SOMETIMES FAILS TO LIVE UP TO THE ARBITRARY ENVIRONS THAT IT ATTEMPTS TO DEPICT. THOSE DAMN SWITCHES STILL HAVE THE SAME DESIGN, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY ARE IN INDIA OR LARA'S OWN HOUSE. THE CAMERA STILL CONJURES FRUSTRATION WHEN IT HAS TROUBLE FINDING THE RIGHT ANGLE. LARA CAN'T CLIMB ON ANY SURFACE ANGLED MORE THAN 45 DEGREES. BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER IN MY BOOK. THESE QUALMS EXISTED IN THE FIRST GAME, AND IT STILL DESERVED AN A FOR ITS REVOLUTIONARY QUALITIES. WITH A SLIGHTLY IMPROVED ENGINE AND AN EXCELLENT SOUNDTRACK, THIS IS THE BEST OF THE TRIO, AND IT GOES RECOMMENDED TO ANYONE CRAVING ANOTHER LARA CROFT ADVENTURE. IT JUST ISN'T REVOLUTIONARY BY TODAY'S STANDARDS.



Top Gear Overdrive•boss studios•kemco

As Reviewed By: Dave Halverson [page 69]

IF THE CONTROL IS SO BASIC, THEN WHY CAN'T THEY STAY ON THE TRACK? THEY'RE CALLED BRAKES! TAKE THE TIME TO MASTER THIS ONE AND YOU'LL FIND A WELL-THOUGHT-OUT AND VERY PLAYABLE N64 RACER.



- USE OF THE RAM PAK MAKES A MARKED DIFFERENCE IN VISUAL QUALITY OVER OTHER N64 RACING GAMES.
- FLOATY PHYSICS AND INEXPLICABLE COLLISION ERRORS WILL CAUSE FRUSTRATION.

Dave Rees:

C+

INFORMED OF TOP GEAR OVERDRIVE'S EMPLOYMENT OF THE RAM PAK AND AN MPEG-3 SOUNDTRACK, I THOUGHT THAT THE N64 MIGHT FINALLY BE RECEIVING ITS CHAMPION OF RACING. THE COURSES DISPLAY SOME EXCEPTIONAL DETAIL WITH THE RAM EXTENDED, THE MUSIC (ALBEIT INCREDIBLY CHEESY ROCK BY MY STANDARDS) IS OF A HIGH QUALITY THAT YOU JUST DON'T FIND ON THE N64, AND THERE IS SOME DEPTH ADDED VIA CAR UPGRADES/MODIFICATIONS AND MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS. BUT THE DIFFICULT CONTROL AND PUZZLING COLLISION, WHICH SOMETIMES CAUSES YOUR VEHICLE TO ERUPT INTO FLAMES UNEXPECTEDLY, LOWERS THE GAME'S FINAL GRADE IN MY BOOK. COMPARED TO ITS COMPETITION ON N64, HOWEVER, I SUPPOSE THIS GAME DOES HAVE ITS MERITS.



- GOOD N64 ENGINE COUPLED WITH HIGH-RES RAM PAK SUPPORT MAKES FOR ATTRACTIVE VIEWING.
- OVERLY SIMPLISTIC CONTROL METHOD IS A TURN-OFF, AND BIZARRE OFF-TRACK EXPLOSIONS ARE FRUSTRATING.

Mike Griffin:

C+

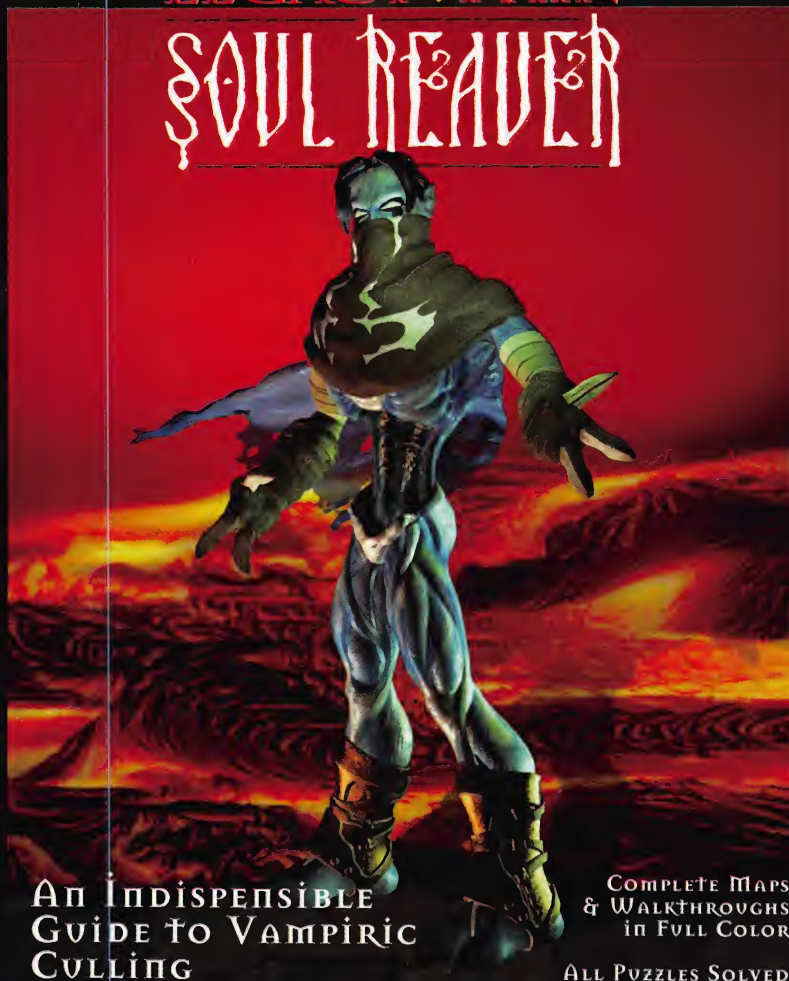
THANKS TO EZRA DREISBACH, THE WIZARD BEHIND SUCH SYSTEM-DEFYING ENGINES AS DUKE NUKEM SATURN, TGO DRAWS WIDE ENVIRONMENTS FAR INTO THE DISTANCE AT A CONSTANT 30 FPS, EVEN WHEN YOU PLAY THE GAME IN HIGH-RES USING THE RAM EXPANSION. NICE. I'M VERY DISAPPOINTED WITH THE BIZARRE PHYSICS, HOWEVER. THE HANDLING IS BARE-BONES DRIFTING USING THE ANALOG STICK. THERE'S VERY LITTLE TECHNIQUE INVOLVED, WHICH ISN'T MY CUP OF TEA. SECONDLY, WHEN YOU GO OFF COURSE, YOU EXPLODE. YOU BLOW UP! WHAT'S UP WITH THAT? THE TROUBLE IS, THE OFF-COURSE COLLISION IS INSANELY HAPHAZARD. YOU'LL BE BLOWING UP FOR NO GOOD REASON, OFTEN. OTHERWISE, TGO PROVIDES BASIC MULTIPLAYER FUN.

Soul Food...



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PUBLICATIONS INC



To be honest, recent NBA games haven't exactly been spectacular. We've enjoyed a couple of solid, B-range games, but certainly no A-quality titles. Maybe the arrival of powerful systems like the Dreamcast will help to inspire more appealing basketball titles. This sport belongs on consoles, there's no question. With good pad control and the joy of crowded-room multiplayer action, hoops games have always belonged on consoles. The latest console basketball game to hit GR is *NBA In The Zone '99* for the N64. This is Konami's annual NBA title, and as usual, it's very playable. But can *In The Zone '99* compare favorably in other areas to the competition on the N64?

The answer to that question is a resounding no, but it's not as harsh as you might think. If you haven't bought an NBA game for the N64 up to now, you could easily buy *In The Zone '99* and be pretty happy overall. The control is good, marred only by a few clumsy moves, the presentation and sound are both fine, and the interface is almost perfect. EA's *NBA Live '99* is much cleaner graphically, has more impressive presentation and sound, and sports an interface that might be even closer to perfection. And yet I find myself preferring the gameplay of *In The Zone '99*.

Let me put this confusion to rest: If you still intend to buy a basketball game for your N64, take a look at both *NBA Live '99* and *NBA In The Zone '99*. *Live '99* offers the more attractive package between the pair, and *ITZ '99* supplies a faster gameplay experience. Whichever characteristic drives you to purchase a basketball game should be acted upon immediately. Personally, I'm still waiting for a game that fully captures the excitement of today's dazzling NBA play. ⚡



The in-game interface (free throws, replays) is quite good. There are plenty of good camera angles and options. Also, you can create a player and take him into the game, or challenge a friend or the CPU in the 3-Point shootout contest.

NBA IN THE ZONE '99

developer: konami publisher: konami available: now



Ubi Soft are set to enter the fiercely competitive F1 racing genre with a familiar name in tow. This isn't the *Monaco GP* of Sega arcade fame, but an entirely new, fully licensed, original Ubi production, soon to be available on the Nintendo 64, PlayStation, and PC, and sometime in the near future on the Dreamcast. Hard-core simulation fans will no doubt relish in *Monaco's* vast array of features, which cover the gambit in terms of F1 racing. From adjustable weather and every aspect of the racecars to every team and driver, nothing has been left out of the mix in terms of modes of play and options. What will ultimately make or break *Monaco*, however, is the graphics and all-important frame rate. Currently, while the game looks gorgeous, it has a severe case of the chugs when the track is packed with competitors. Racing alone, however, the game runs at a brisk pace. If Ubi are able to keep things moving when the action heats up (perhaps the Ram Pak will come into play), *Monaco GP* could easily become the best F1 racer available for the N64, unseating Ubi's offering from '97, *F1 Pole Position*. ⚡



Although these screens are all from the Nintendo 64 game, Monaco will soon be available for every major platform... Love that Storm chassis!

MONACO GP

developer: ubi soft publisher: ubi soft available: winter



GAMERS' REPUBLIC
SPORTS



Welcome to GR's new-look arcade corner! With special reports, interviews and competitions live from our overseas correspondent in Japan, you can be sure that we're dedicated in

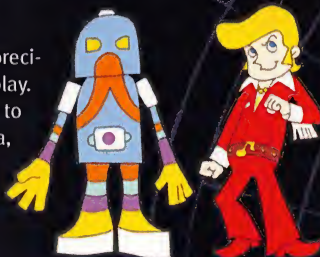
bringing you the latest and greatest gaming news from the entire Japanese arcade scene. And next month, look forward to a contest featuring collectable Sega t-shirts!

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION © 1998 KONAMI. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

This dance simulation game is at the front of many arcade centers with long queues of people waiting to play. It's like actually performing *Bust-a-Move* for real, but it's a sure bet you'll never see a home conversion of this title. There are four arrows in the floor unit that you must step on in rhythm to match those displayed on the screen. You can select the music you want to listen to and choose your own difficulty level. In Easy Mode, you can dance to the end of the song no matter how many mistakes you make, but in Normal and Hard you must perform all the dance steps to reach the end.

POP'N MUSIC © 1998 KONAMI. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Those who found *Beat Mania* a little too difficult will probably appreciate this sound simulation game, which is considerably easier to play. There are nine big buttons that you must press in the correct order to match the notes on the screen. Since the buttons take up a wide area, two players can play simultaneously but at no extra cost. All the music consists of pop songs and the onscreen visuals are a lot more appealing than *Beat Mania*'s graphics as well. All in all, a game orientated more towards casual users than game maniacs.



POP 'N MUSIC



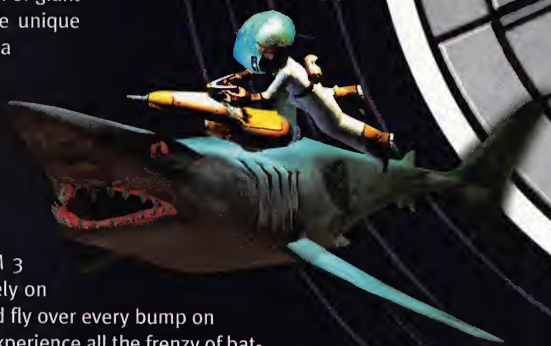
DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION

ARCADE

THE OCEAN HUNTER © 1998 SEGA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

AM 1 have pushed the Model 3 to the limit with a graphical feast of oceanic adventure in which you explore the seven seas in search of giant sea monsters that are attacking ships. In order to capture the unique atmosphere of underwater shooting, the electro-gun uses a unique firing system that requires you to think ahead and aim your shots carefully. It's a completely different style than either *Virtua Cop* or *HOTD*. All of the sea beasts, from sharks to giant crabs, have been modeled perfectly with smooth and realistic motion. Don't miss it!

THE OCEAN HUNTER



DIRT DEVILS © 1998 SEGA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Breaking from the traditional format of the racing genre, AM 3 have given us an off-road racer in which the emphasis is squarely on what you do in the air rather than on the ground as you leap and fly over every bump on the course. Send your rivals flying as you fight for position and experience all the frenzy of battling bumper to bumper as you race around three awesome courses (Canyon, Stadium and City). The five distinct cars handle very differently, from the quick and nimble Desert Buggy up to the tank-like HUMVEE, so being able to choose the right car for the right course is essential.



DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION



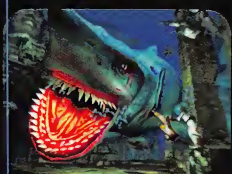
POP 'N MUSIC



THE OCEAN HUNTER



DIRT DEVILS



DIRT DEVILS



CHAOS HEAT

CHAOS HEAT © 1998 TAITO CORP. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Scientists lose control of a strange alien organism whose DNA they had experimented on, and their research lab is overrun by mutant creatures and zombies. You (and a friend in two-player mode) must blast through six stages full of fiendish monsters to kill the master bio-horror. Luckily, Taito have given you a wide array of weapons from napalm to missiles to play with and plenty of other power-up items as well. With several junction points giving four different routes through the game and each of the three characters utilizing different base weapons and abilities, the variety of gameplay makes this a truly great action shooter.



GUNMEN WARS

GUNMEN WARS © 1998 NAMCO. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

A multiplayer machine-gun shooting game where two teams of four players must battle it out in mechanized combat suits. To make it a little more fun, the cabinet's built-in camera takes your picture and as you run around the stages you can see the photos of everyone's faces hanging over their characters. Non-player characters are controlled by the CPU. There are three battle fields for Beginner (Waterfront Park), Intermediate (Shopping Street) and Expert (Subway). The gun is mounted on a giant joystick, so the controls are very simple, allowing you to concentrate on hunting the guy who shot you last.

SPECIAL



THE LAST BLADE 2

THE LAST BLADE 2 © 1998 SNK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

TLB 2 is a sequel with most of the prequel's characters remaining, the previous boss now playable and four new characters added (Kojiro Sanada, Setsuna, Hibiki Takane and Mukuro). The game system has changed slightly with minor revisions to several features, but the biggest differences come with the addition of Mid-Air Repel, Guard Cancel Repel and Dash Attack (Upper and Lower). However, the basis of the game remains faithful to the original, with the emphasis on sword-fighting action in which you can choose between power or technique for your character's weapon style and enjoy completely different gameplay. A worthy successor.

FLIP SHOT © 1998 VISCO CORP. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

In the year 20XX, only five people entered the Naniwa Glorious Iron Nerve Championship, which determined who had the most guts in the world: Mr. Justice the dunce, Bloody Wolf of the Milky Rangers, the tone-deaf Siren, Afro-mania Simon and Nemoto Chinta, the destitute sexy commander. The rules are easy: use your shield to protect your goal area and smash the ball back at your opponent's targets. Using special commands unique for each of the five zany characters, you can implement a wacky collection of killing techniques. Yes, it's simple, but its comical element is strangely compelling.



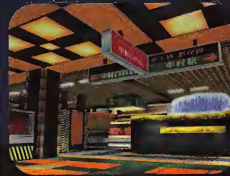
FLIP SHOT



CHAOS HEAT



GUNMEN WARS



THE LAST BLADE 2



FLIP SHOT



WORLD REPUBLIC

'Tis an exciting month indeed for import gamers! We have a top-ten selling RPG for the PS, the sequel to *Bloody Roar*, an incredible polygonal update to *R-Type*, and the first hands-on reviews for three very cool Dreamcast launch titles! Enjoy World Republic!

WORLD REPUBLIC REVIEW • developer/publisher **Contrail/SCEI**

The Legend of Legaia



To be honest, I jumped at the chance to review *Legaia* after seeing it had topped the charts the week before *Zelda* cleaned up in Japan. I watched footage of the game briefly, weeks before the release, and while I wasn't totally impressed, I was still very interested. Anyway, Contrail, *Legaia*'s producers, are closely connected to a past SCEI RPG, *Wild Arms*. The quality of *Legaia* is similar to *Wild Arms*: a solid interface and very progressive gameplay, highlighted by specific, highly polished play-mechanics. I enjoyed playing through *Legaia*, as the polished play mechanics helped me to ignore a few weak areas. The first detail you'll notice is the robust engine. It floats between 20 and 30 fps (pretty smooth), and while the resolution could be better, the polygonal design is usually cluttered and agreeable. There are some cool little towns and dungeon-type maps to dash through, using your

character's pleasantly fast automatic run option. Unfortunately, the main map feels sluggish and takes WAY too long to travel across, but I can handle it because the real joy of *Legaia* is its combat system. It's sort of like *Xenogears*, in that combos are the main attraction, but the impact (literally) is somehow way more satisfying in full 3D. By entering various up, down, left, and right directions in the combo menu, you can have your characters release sequences of crushing, 3D fighter-style hand-to-hand combos.

Charge your AP gauge and the length of the combo increases, allowing for all-powerful Super Arts and Miracle Arts combos. It's fun revealing a new "Arts" combo, because it immediately becomes available in the Automatic combo option in the combat menu. As a result, you don't have to waste a round charging up your gauge to

GHARA

NOAH

VANN



These are two moments you'll be seeing often. Ghara earns a powerful new "Arts" attack technique mid-battle, while Vann crushes with a flying miracle kick!

A dramatic moment for the team as the fog curse is removed!

achieve massive damage. Sadly, battle frequency is often frustratingly high, but the addictive combat system cushions the blow. Besides, all that fighting will boost your three-character crew to powerhouse levels within the first six or seven hours of the game. Nice! As far as the quest

itself goes (it's too easy to concentrate on the battles!), *Legaia* moves along at a good pace and includes just the right amount of real-time cut scenes, boss encounters, and progressive exploration. It has very good music, and decent loading times. Best of all, *Legaia* is a playable import RPG that you shouldn't have too much difficulty adjusting to. It's a fun, recommended title. ☞

WORLD REPUBLIC SAYS "Legaia may have some tedious elements, such as navigating the slow world map, but it offers an extremely solid quest, great characters, and cool attack techniques." B

WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW • developer/publisher Irem

R-TYPE Delta



One of the most legendary shooting franchises of all time has finally broken from its sprite-based bondage and made the leap to polygons in the spectacular vision that is *R-Type Delta*. Shooting aficionados and 2D purists will be glad to know that the gameplay, which has made this shooter such an enduring success, has been faithfully adhered to in the conversion. From the animated minions pouring from the pulsing portals to the screen-filling bosses to the ability to manipulate the ship's



power-pod, it's all here, only now, it looks and plays even more spectacularly than before. Better yet, this phenomenal shooter has already been snagged by an American third party for release in the U.S. (though I can't say who just yet), so we'll get to have a go at it over here in the very near future. For that reason we're only showing off a couple levels, but I can assure you that the game is wholly spectacular in every way. We'll review the U.S. version in an upcoming issue. ⚡



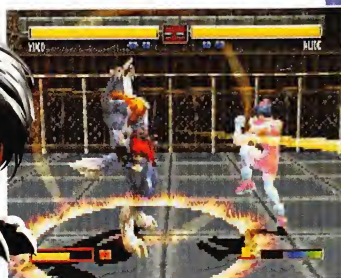
R-TYPE DELTA © 1999 Irem

WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW • developer/publisher HUDSON

Bloody Roar 2



After a successful spell at the arcade, Hudson have almost finished coding the home version. The gameplay remains faithful to the original, with a single button press transforming your character into a powerful beast with incredible attacks and super-human abilities. New features include an improved guard system, in which a Light Guard lets you easily counter with Guard Escape and Guard Attack but leaves you open to a Guard Break. A Heavy Guard will prevent this but lets you do little else. Overall, *BR2* is well balanced, easy to get into, and lots of fun.



Bloody Roar 2 © 1999 HUDSON SOFT © EIGHTING/RAIZING 1999

WORLD REPUBLIC | 09 | 80-81 ...

pen pen trilcelon



I'm absolutely thrilled to be reviewing a Dreamcast game, even if *Pen Pen Trilcelon* is one of those first-generation curiosities that will probably be forgotten once more advanced pieces of software start showing up. But as a showcase for the Dreamcast's potential, *Pen Pen* is incredibly exciting and quite fun when all is said and done.

As its name suggests, *Pen Pen Trilcelon* is a racing game comprised of three elements—sliding, swimming, and walking. Each of the four courses is divided up thusly, and you move from one style of racing to the next in quick succession. While four is indeed a paltry amount of courses, their varied motifs, from a surreal toyland to an adorably spooky haunted house, keep the visual interest high. And there are five different ways to race each course, ranging from easy and long variations to one-on-one races with the runny-nosed Hanamizu character.

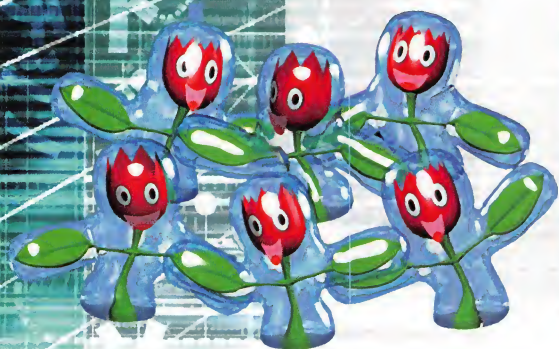


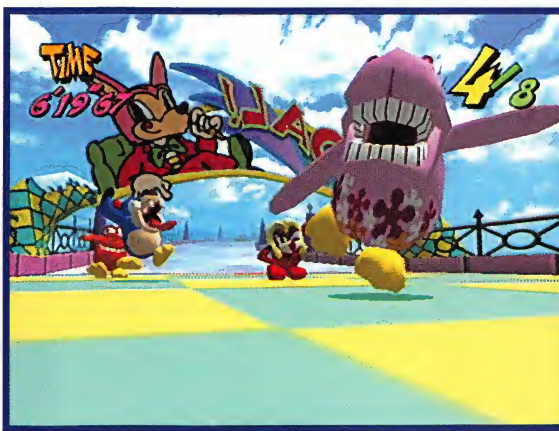
In the top shot, Mr. Bow shoots ahead of Gallery amid giant jellies lining the candy course. Below, the same Mr. Bow plays catch-up to Sparky and the gang.



The gameplay is very simple. In the sliding segments, the freaky *Pen Pens* use their flippers to propel themselves forward on their bellies and rhythmic button pressing is required to attain and hold speed. The same goes for the underwater bits as they use these same flippers to move through the gorgeous aquatic zones. In the walking segments, they waddle along (slowly), jumping up steps and avoiding obstacles. There are turbo ports that allow brief bursts of speed, and in the walking mode, you can dash into an opponent, dizzying them for a few seconds. You can choose one of seven characters initially (there is one "hidden" racer), and these are some of the most bizarre cast of racing characters ever. Each is a mutated penguin crossed with some other animal, leading to such goofy creations as the Jabberjaw-ish Jaw, the dog-like Mr. Bow, and the big pink hippo/penguin Gallery. Whichever character you choose, you'll be treated to a constant barrage of bizarre, incomprehensible babble as they slide and swim through the courses. And as you earn medals, you can make each character even more twisted by opening up a huge array of hats, shoes, and other accessories to put on the *Pen Pens*. These accessories, ranging from spinning red-light hats to bunny ears and high heels, have no bearing on performance; they just look weird.

And first-generation or not, *Pen Pen* is an incredible treat for the eyes and is so far beyond what current 32- and 64-bit hardware is capable of, it's sometimes hard to believe. Even those used to the pristine visuals of accel-

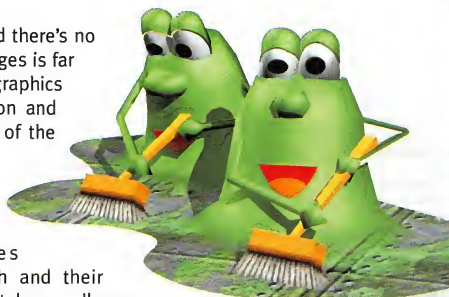




The underwater sections display a very effective hazing in the distance, lending a great sense of volume to the water as Jaw flies through the haunted ship in one of Pen Pen's dazzling replays. On the left, Battery celebrates her win on Bambi Mask's course.



erated PCs will be wowed by this game, and there's no denying that a console producing these images is far more exciting than some two-grand PC. The graphics are so clear and colorful and the resolution and frame rate so high, you literally sit in awe of the game the entire time you're playing. This is especially true during the awesome looking replays. The Pen Pen's themselves are wonders of polygonal deformation as their



bodies stretch and their faces take on all manner of whacked-out expressions and all the courses are stunning in their clarity and vibrancy. It's still hard to get over not seeing pixels and not having to put up with warping textures and z-buffering problems. Truth be told, though, the environments are fairly simple in their polygonal construction and the game does chug a bit when the chaos level is high.

In the end, *Pen Pen* ends up being more exciting as a harbinger of things to come than as an actual game itself. Of course, the four-player split screen is quite fun and it retains a mostly respectable frame rate and has only a modicum of pop-up, but one can't help wishing for more gameplay. And the only replay incentive is to open the myriad costumes and accessories for all the characters. But just look at those graphics!

WORLD REPUBLIC SAYS: *Pen Pen* is a beautiful first-generation game, but like many such virginal efforts, it's short and suffers from a lack of depth. The multiplayer modes are good fun for a spell, but frame rates suffer quite badly at times in four-player mode. Still, anyone who sees the game can't help but be taken aback by the vibrant colors and pristine resolution. In the end, not a bad first effort. **B-**



Note: F.Y.I., our DCs have been getting pretty hot after about an hour and a half of gameplay. You can feel a generous amount of heat around the lower left corner of the disc hub if you open the lid. We've even taken precautionary measures like plugging into step-down power converters and placing the system in well-ventilated areas. Important: The heat up hasn't affected the DC's performance in the least. We do shut it down, though, just to be on the safe side, even when two hours of gameplay isn't enough.

WORLD REPUBLIC REVIEW • developer-Genki/publisher-Sega

VIRTUA FIGHTER 3tb

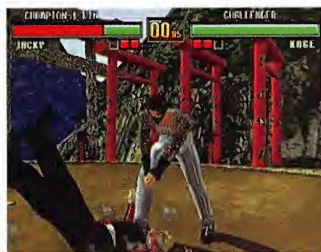


Japan's biggest fighting game has exploded onto the Dreamcast! We've been playing VF3tb with a long-time Virtua Fighter expert to ensure that the following review is as

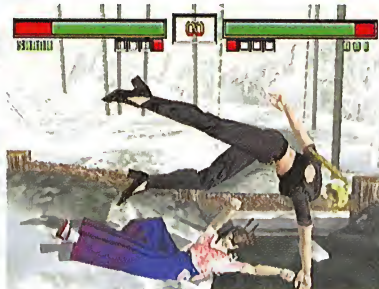
precise and fair as possible. First off, the Dreamcast version of *Virtua Fighter 3 Team Battle* is clearly the best-looking console fighter of all time. Gorgeous 3D backgrounds, brilliant 640 x 480 resolution, and stunning 60 fps motion are the standard. There are fewer polygons on the characters than the arcade game, making for pointy elbows and hips, and slight dips in the shoulders (due to less enveloping), but they still look spectacular. In addition, Jeffrey's island stage has inferior tide and

sand effects, and the water isn't as layered as in the arcade. In the subway stage, the tunnels aren't drawn into the background quite as far, and in Shun's stage the boat doesn't sit on the water as realistically. Also, on both Shun and Jeffrey's stage (the last backgrounds to be finalized), there is minor slow-down during the zoom-in when the match begins. *Team Battle*'s static mural backgrounds are lower res, but you can switch to the quality original VF3 murals (see Codex this month). Finally, the characters' shadows always breaks into segments when it passes over terrain of varying heights; it did not fragment this way in the arcade. The game's visuals are mind-blowing regardless, but this is an arcade port, so every detail has to be shared. The fact is, this version has actually erased slow-down in certain areas, and the textures are so perfect they seem to be straight from AM2's texture palette. When you see the game on your own TV for the first time your jaw will hit the floor. The DC is very powerful hardware indeed.

In terms of gameplay, VF3tb plays beautifully. There are a few gameplay inconsistencies, but only experts will notice. In general, the timing feels great. If you haven't been into VF games in the past, VF3tb might convert you. The escape button adds an incredibly satisfying and dynamic dimension to the series, and the game moves much faster than previous VFs. The lack of a Versus mode is an annoyance, since you can't select a new character after winning against a human (only the "New Challenger" is able to), and the loading is lengthy in Team Battle mode, but VF3tb is still an absolutely remarkable conversion. Future arcade conversions will be even closer, so be afraid! ☘



*Virtua
Fighter
3tb*™



WORLD REPUBLIC SAYS "The closest arcade-to-home 3D fighter conversion of all time. VF fans will be in love, newbies will drool, and all others will stare..." **A-**

WORLD REPUBLIC REVIEW • developer-General Entertainment • publisher-Sega • Available now-Japan

GODZILLA GENERATIONS

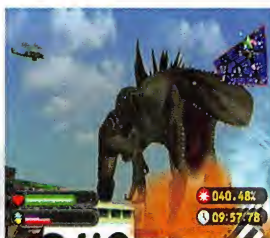


Before bestowing upon you my first Dreamcast game review, I must say that I am overjoyed with my new console. It exhibits the highest quality in workmanship and the controller, with the PDA tucked away neatly inside, is a marvel to hold. While the initial games may

not take full advantage of the system's capabilities, they do send an undeniable message that where we are going with home video game consoles is the place we've always dreamt about. The time is now, and man, is it going to be heaven!

Prior to reviewing *Godzilla Generations*, I played the game for a good 12 hours, beating it using the original Godzilla, and then Godzilla '84 to uncover our addition to Toho's leg-

played so that you can see where you are. It's best to totally demolish each area with a tail spin (before moving on, make sure to burn any trees in the vicinity, too), because backtracking through the rubble after everything in the level is annihilated can be a daunting task when looking for any little piece you missed. To regain power drained by smashing things and attacks, all Godzilla needs to do is bust out his mighty roar, but this takes a long time when you're under fire, especially in the later stages where more comes at you, more often. When it's all over, you'll be judged on six elements: Destroy – how much you cleared; Speed – how fast you cleared it; Shoot –



endary lizard, Godzilla '98, whom you can only access after beating the game twice. In all, there are five playable Zilla's: 1954, '84, and '98, along with 1967's baby and 1974's Mecha

G o d z i l l a. Each Godzilla has different attributes in terms of projectile breath (be it fire, ice, eye lasers, or '98's steamy bad breath) and each

moves somewhat differently, especially ours, who features a running option. While I'm sure many think *Generations* is simply about walking into buildings, it's really not. There's a method of destruction with each Godzilla, and if you open your mind to what a Godzilla action game should be, in which the player assumes the role of Godzilla, I'm sure you'll agree that General Entertainment have done a fine job with a not-so-hot concept.

Pictured left Godzilla '84 takes on some thick aerial assaults, and at right, Mecca Godzilla beams...



what differently, especially ours, who features a running option. While I'm sure many think *Generations* is simply about walking into buildings, it's really not. There's a method of destruction with each Godzilla, and if you open your mind to what a Godzilla action game should be, in which the player assumes the role of Godzilla, I'm sure you'll agree that General Entertainment have done a fine job with a not-so-hot concept.

The essence of the gameplay, which is presented in beautifully cinematic style via an amazingly intelligent camera, is to destroy buildings, huge ships, bridges, stadiums and even trees, all the while stomping or blasting ground-based resistance while every so often pausing to blow any aircraft out of the sky. Jets, helicopters and science pods attack in waves and must be dealt with swiftly. Sound easy? Well, it can be. But to get 100 percent clear and the time bonus that goes along with it, you'll need to clear everything on the map, which requires very strategic city clearing, as only the direct portion you are working on is dis-

your marksmanship vs. Aerial assaults; Power – how much energy you have in reserve; Combo – blasting or destroying multiple dwellings in one fatal swoop; and Balance – how much you use your tail swipe, breath, and brawn to clear an area. At the end of the day, *Godzilla Generations* is easy to master, but if you're a fan, watching it and listening to it is in itself a wondrous event. In a cinematic sense, this game provided me with glimpses of Godzilla I can only describe as extraordinary – visions of sitting in front of the TV as a kid swirling through my memory. If it boils down to playing a movie, I'd have to say that *Generations* comes closer to providing that experience than any game I've ever seen or played. As for the music, well, it's everything you remember it to be, but the finale music, as you finish off Tokyo, sent chills down my spine. Besides the main game, there's also an option to insert your *Godzilla* PDA, on which you can raise little monsters, and fight it out vs. style, and a nice collection of movie footage is yours for the viewing in the game's film vault. This adds to the overall Godzilla fest that is this great CD. Dare I say it's the best Godzilla game ever made?

I do! ♪



Godzilla '98, attainable by beating the game twice, has weaker attacks but the ability to run!



WORLD REPUBLIC SAYS "While there's plenty of room for improvement, *Godzilla Generations* offers Zilla fans a worthy stomp." **C+**

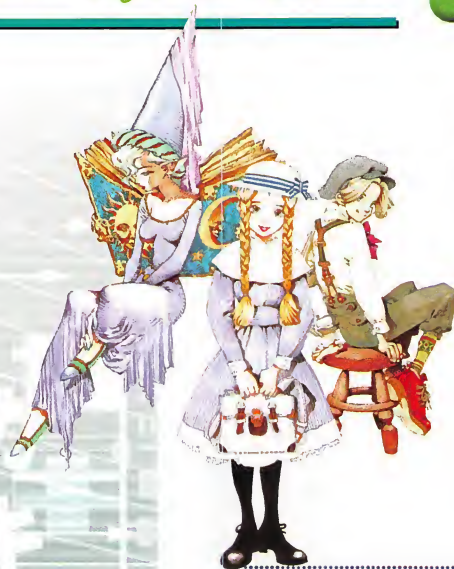
ENIX PREVIEW | 09 | 84...

enix preview

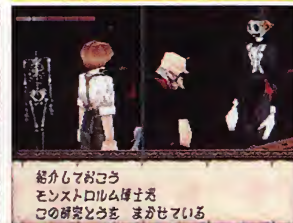


WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW

MYSTIC ARK 2

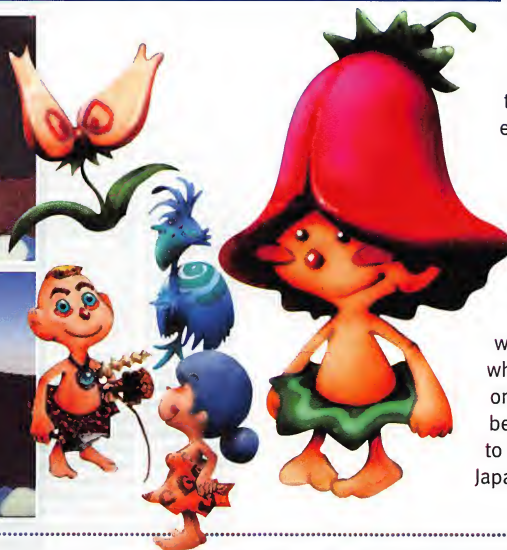
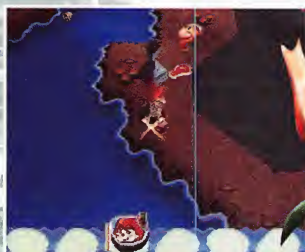


Shedding its overhead 2D roots, *Mystic Ark 2* from Produce returns with only the original game's artist and, well, everything else is new. *Mystic Ark 2* centers around a mysterious guy called Mr. Silverfingers(!), the proprietor of a theatrical company. It seems that this rather oddly named fellow has stolen seven Arks, or spirits, and it's up to you to retrieve them. Each of the Arks represents such things as courage and dreams, and you must use the power of these Arks to help you solve the various puzzles in the game. You can summon Arks using spirit cards and use them in the real-time battles. *MA 2* is due in the spring.



WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW

GU GU TROOPS



Enix are preparing to dish up some wacky, prehistoric action from Produce and music team Two Five. There isn't much of a story to *Gu Gu Troops*—only the vague notion that you're trying to reach the legendary BossBoss Mammoth and eat its meat.

Fully polygonal, *Gu Gu Troops* is set up as a real-time simulation wherein you input commands to your character and enjoy the results. When you give items to one of six characters that live in the mysterious, prehistoric planet, they will begin moving about according to what they were given. You can never tell what effect a particular item is going to have on a character, so by trial and error, you'll begin to understand which items allow you to accomplish specific tasks. *Gu Gu* is due in Japan in late January.

WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW

POP'N TANKS



Enix are preparing a new super-deformed tank game for Japanese PlayStation owners called *Pop'n Tanks*. The story involves a despot called Talin, and when he loses a newly developed style of tank called Petit and it falls into your hands, he mobilizes his empire in an effort to retrieve it.

Pop'n Tanks will feature two different modes of play—Story and Tank World. In Story mode, you get to interact with other characters as you move the game's myriad levels. In the free-for-all Tank World mode, you can have straight battles against CPU or human opponents. There will be

over twenty characters in this mode and more than 300 parts with which to modify tanks. *Pop'n Tanks* is due in March.





The Legend of the River King © 1998 Victor Interactive Software Inc.

WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW • developer/publisher **PACK-IN-SOFT**

The Legend of the River King



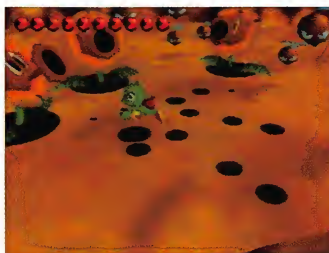
A fishing RPG with the most realistic fish swimming motion you'll ever see. Choose from a variety of fishing equipment to match the conditions and cast away until you get a bite. With the rumble pack, you can then feel the pull of the fish, and after you land it you can put it in your virtual fish tank and watch it swim around. If you have the GB version of *River King*, you can transfer your data via the 64GB for extra benefits. You can also collect insects, go birdwatching and pick flowers through all four seasons.

WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW • developer/publisher **JAPAN SUPPLY SYSTEM**

Chameleon Twist 2

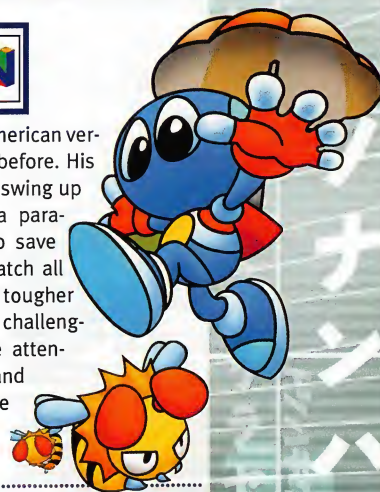


A real chameleon? For those who remember the original, you'll appreciate JSS's efforts in giving the American version a little touch of realism. More than that, our green friend is also a lot more powerful than before. His



Chameleon Twist 2 © 1998 Japan Supply System

tongue now allows him to swing up and down, and he has a parachute in his back-pack to save him from long falls. To match all this, the enemies are a lot tougher and the levels a lot more challenging, and with much more attention being paid to stage and character design, the game looks as good as it plays.

WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW • developer/publisher **EPOCH**

Doraemon 2



Doraemon 2 © 1998 EPOCH Co., LTD

Doraemon and friends are back again for another adventure, but to avoid getting lost on their travels again, a compass now appears onscreen to show your direction. Next to that is a clock that shows the day and time, because this time you're playing in real-time. At night, the screen gets darker and certain nighttime-only events become available. When the next day comes, there's the possibility of a weather change as well; it even rains. A new emotion system is also in effect so that when your character is sad or happy, etc., he responds accordingly.

WORLD REPUBLIC PREVIEW • developer/publisher **TOSHIBA/EMI**

Lucifer Ring



In this simple one-player action title from Toshiba/EMI, you get to hack and slash baddies in a sort of fantasy-based 3D *Final Fight*-style game. As enemies approach, you're locked within a confined area and must eliminate all foes before moving on. There are powerful swords to find and big bosses to fight, though the graphics are admittedly rather first-generation in appearance. *Lucifer Ring* from Toshiba/EMI is set to debut in Japan shortly, with an American release currently under discussion. We'll be keeping you posted on the game's development.



Lucifer Ring © TOSHIBA-EMI LIMITED

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ANIME REPUBLIC VIDEO TRANSFER DIGITAL BROADCAST SYSTEM

USHIO & TORA

• 1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1992 TOHO (JPN)
60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆ 1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: An ancient demon akin to feasting on men, women, and children (an equal opportunity demon!) is challenged one day by a raven-haired warrior armed only with a spear. After a grueling four-day battle, on the fifth day the warrior finally got the best of the demon and impales him, driving his spear through the demon, into a rock. There the demon lay, not dead, but stuck to the rock. In an effort to seal the demon, the people built a temple around it concealing it deep within. The warrior became the temple's keeper, and through the generations it has stood. Our story takes place some 500 years later as Ushio's father is again telling the tall tale that Ushio believes to be a total fabrication to keep donations pouring in from the frightened villagers. But Ushio soon accidentally breaks the sacred seal and discovers the demon, who calmly asks to be released so that he may dine on Ushio and any other human he feels like chewing. Of course, Ushio passes and drives the spear even deeper into the beast's torso. But unbeknownst to Ushio, by breaking the seal he has unleashed a rash of fish monsters who begin terrorizing his friends and family. The only way to stop them is by freeing the demon. When he eventually does, only his sacred spear keeps him from becoming lunch, as the demon, whom he names Tora (or Tiger), invisible to others, awaits the opportunity to strike. The relationship between demon and demon warrior (a fatal attraction if there ever was one) ensues...

Character design: Markedly unique. Tora and the assorted demons are cleverly designed, and the humans have a distinctly different look. Ushio's raven hair is cool, too.

Animation: Good overall, Japanese TV quality.

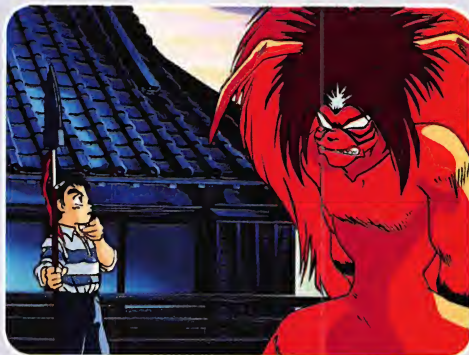
Soundtrack: Fits like a glove. Xlnt throughout.

Fight Scenes: There's no love lost between these two and they let you know it in high style. Great demon encounters abound as well.

Highlight: The lip service between Ushio and Tora.

Final analysis: Those who waited for the dub to own Ushio and Tora won't be disappointed. Tora's voice isn't what I expected, but I suppose I'll get over it.

-Dave Halverson



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DIRTY PAIR FLASH



DIRTY PAIR FLASH

•1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • SUNRISE (JP)
60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH



ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: Kei mistakenly decapitates an exact replica of herself. It turns out that the scary robot belongs to a very important young boy: The child of a major investor for the 3WA! Kei is forced to substitute for the robot while the freaky child completes his repairs. Soon she realizes that

the child is rich and totally idolizes her, so she tries to please the little bugger in typical materialistic fashion. Soon an important lesson is taught. In the next episode, Chief Poporo runs into a little trouble. It seems as though an enemy from the past has returned, requesting the Chief's head as payment for his imprisonment! The Chief's nemesis has also acquired a super powerful mechanized suit...

Character design: 100 percent likeable as usual. The Lovely Angels look good relaxed, in action, any time! With each episode you get to know them a little better. Great enemies.

Animation: Very good for the most part. The first episode is a little low on frames, though.

Dubbing: DPF is actually getting better. At least the enemies sound evil now, not pathetic.

Soundtrack: Always cheesy, but always super-high quality!

Fight Scenes: When the Chief's mad nemesis shows up... boom!

Highlight: As you can tell, the revenge murder attempt by the Chief's nemesis is great entertainment. A poor little girl becomes involved, too. Boo-hoo!

Final analysis: Although the first episode is - yawn - boring, the solid character design sees it through. Episode 2's action is easily worth the price of admission.

-Mike Griffin



THE MYSTERIOUS PLAY

•1998 PIONEER (USA) • 1995 TV TOKYO (JP)
100 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH



ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: A young school girl, Miyaki (with a peculiar affinity for food), is drawn into the school library where she and her friend Yui discover an ancient book with the power to open a portal to another world. Yui unknowingly turns page one and the pair is thrust into a supposedly mystical ancient China. Miyaki's first notion? "A dream without ice cream, no double cheeseburgers, or triple scoops with chocomint?" Yep, this is a fruity one. Yui is quickly warped back to school where, as she reads the book, the tale unfolds in all of its chick-flick splendor. Guys will hate this tape, but our female fan, Melanie, loves this one. It certainly is spunky and extremely light hearted.

Character design: Nicely drawn but sparsely detailed. Pretty standard fare.

Animation: There's little to celebrate in terms of animation. Almost all of the populated shots are completely still, and when there is action it's far from fluid.

Dubbing: As usual, Pioneer does a spectacular job in the voice-acting department.

Soundtrack: Fitting and well scored; again, Pioneer's high

production standards are evident.

Fight Scenes: When Miyaki mimics the wrestling she caught on pay per view, it's pretty funny, but, for the most part, the fights are bland.

Highlight: Miyaki blows a bubble that pops on her face and is mistaken

for a scary ghost! Those ancient chinese... so naive.

Final analysis: *Mysterious Play* can only be described as cute. If you're into the fruity stuff, you'll probably be in heaven with this one.

-Dave Halverson



MYSTERIOUS PLAY

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SLAYERS: EXPLOSION ARRAY

•1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1996 KANZAKA HAJIME (JP)
45 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH



ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: The great wizard, Azal Rugani, crafted a magical shadow reflector some 400 years ago to dispel evil. Legend has it that whomever is reflected in its gaze will have their image formed as an exact replica with opposite characteristics (but the same knowledge and skill). When the plans to unearth it are stolen by the VP of the PMS (that's the Professional Magic-users Society, smart guy), Lagen, they send Lina and Naga after the scoundrel with a 200-gold-coin bounty on his head. And you know how much Lina and Nahga love gold! Another great story, full of comedy and banter.

Animation: Excellent. The highest OVA quality is exhibited. Alongside the amazing detail and phenomenal painting, the overall look is far beyond the norm.

Dubbing: As Lina Inverse, Cynthia Martinez has come into her own. She does a spectacular job, as does Kelly Manison as Nahga. Together, they are the best voice acting duo I've heard this year.

Character Design: Original illustrations by Rui Araizumi, *Slayers* is privy to perhaps the best character designs in the anime universe.

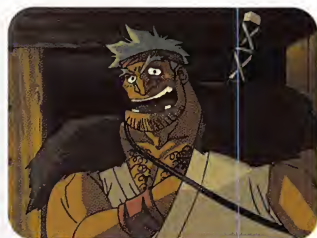
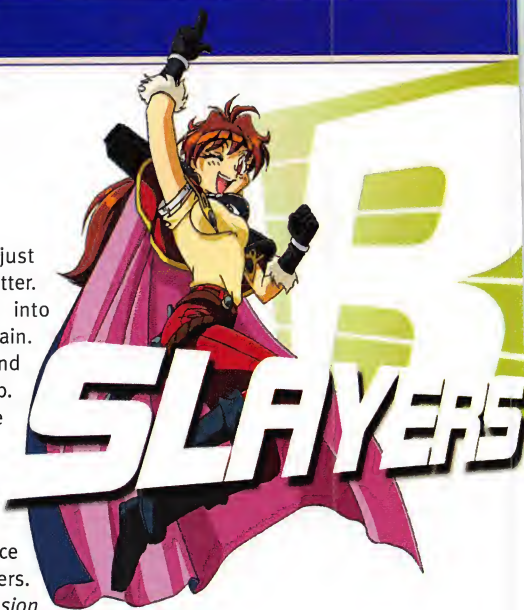
Soundtrack: An excellent theatrical score.

Fight Scenes: It just doesn't get any better. Lina's magic goes into overdrive once again. The animation and lighting are superb.

Highlight: There are many, but I love when Nahga's big boobs bounce her off a thin ledge.

Final analysis: Once again *Slayers* delivers. At the end of *Explosion Array* awaits a bonus portfolio, showcasing all three of ADV's *Slayers* OVAs. A joy to behold from beginning to end.

-Dave Halverson



GUNDAM 0083

•1998 animevillage.com (USA) • 1991 SUNRISE (JP)
4 EPISODES 387 MINUTES • SUBTITLED



ACTION/DRAMA

Story: *Gundam 0083* opens in the heat of the greatest battle of the one-year war with the Earth Federation taking victory over the Duchy of Zeon. Soon after, a truce was signed and until now peace reigned... But that is about to change. The Zeon's revenge begins as a mechanic on one of two of the Earth Federation's prototype assault suits sells out, allowing a suit armed with a nuke to be hijacked from right under the Federation's noses. Young rookie pilot Kou Uraki jumps into action with the second suit and the fray begins. An epic series along the lines of *Macross*, this anime will be especially embraced by fans of the series.

Character design: Some of the most breathtaking and legendary mech designs in existence today. Instantly recognizable and timeless. The human elements are as effective, with great distinction between good and evil factions.

Animation: Quality. Even the simplest of scenes such as driving in a jeep are highly animated.

Soundtrack: Foreboding classic arrangements. Distinctly Japanese.

Fight Scenes: Epic mecha battles, highly animated and skillfully directed. A mech fan's dream come true.

Highlight: The epic battles surrounded by beautiful emissions, smoke, fire, and drama.

Final analysis: Go to animevillage.com and buy the whole series right now!

-Dave Halverson



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801 TTS AIRBATS: 3RD STRIKE

• 1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1996 TOSHIMITSU SHIMIZU (JP)
TWO EPISODES 60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH



ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: Those wacky Airbats are back in their third dubbed adventure. Where else would you find two girls talking about a new ramen spot while piloting a couple F-16s? As a matter of fact, they land their planes as a result, and abandon training when they can't decide who's going to escort Isurugi to the place that is holding a Ramen-eating contest. Flight training becomes Ramen-eating training and, er, you can guess the rest.

Character design: We've been down this road before, so I'll just say highly detailed and expressive with just the right amount of exaggeration. Excellent.

Animation: Very good quality overall. The coloring and shading is especially vibrant in this episode.

Dubbing: Excellent, as usual. The cast obviously has the characters completely dialed in.

Soundtrack: A little saucier than normal as the series slips into total weirdness.

Fight Scenes: Who cares! Ramen eating is brutal enough!

Highlight: The full on military ops for the Ramen-eating contest - Satellite surveillance, the 7th Fleet, you name it!

Final analysis: Ramen-eating is war, baby!
The best Airbats yet!

-Dave Halverson



THE "RIGHT STUFF" HAS
NEVER BEEN SO NICELY
PACKED!

SYNOPSIS

801 TTS
AIRBATS



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"A FUN MIX OF HIGH FANTASY AND WACKY HUMOR."

-Paul Sudlow
WIZARD MAGAZINE



REFLECTIONS OF EVIL

What could possibly be more dangerous than an encounter with the infamously short tempered Lina Inverse? Try an encounter with 2 Linas! Magically replicated for your viewing pleasure, the great and mighty Lina Inverse stands poised to change the world of wizardry forever!



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Meet Lina Inverse, the queen of overkill and moderately proportioned sorceress extraordinaire who's reunion with a curvaceous rival results in a vacation gone awry. The mysterious island of Mipross is home to legendary hot springs, but sinister forces await our heroines among the crowds of tourists. Leave it to Lina to find trouble in paradise!



Just when you thought things were bad, they get Inverse!

Seeking to perfect his mysterious arts, the mad alchemist, Diol, has selected none other than Lina Inverse to be the catalyst, the final ingredient as it were, in the creation of the ultimate monster. Needless to say, Lina isn't exactly flattered. Caught in a bizarre family struggle, Lina's endurance of the absurd is put to the test in Slayars: Dragon Slave!

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Errata...

In last month's code section, we printed an erroneous cheat for WCW. The "Fight as Warrior" code does not work (as many of you have noticed). We're sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused the rattle fans out there.



For the following codes, you'll hear "Extreme" spoken to confirm...



Enter one of the following commands into the console (press ~) to activate the corresponding cheat.

meatwagon...

Kills all monsters in level

twoweeks...

Toggle Tome Of Power power-up

suckitdown all...

All items

suckitdown chicken...

Chicken mode

kill...

Commit suicide

victor...

Makes you non-target to some monsters

kiwi...

Toggle no clipping

playbetter...

Toggle God mode

angermonsters...

Aggressive monsters

crazymonsters...

Bezerk monsters

spawn (name)...

Spawn indicated object, weapon, or monster



Extreme C 2

For the following codes, you'll hear "Extreme" spoken to confirm correct entry.

VENOM BIKE

Enter 55HZ1MH3H9H1 as a password.

WIPEOUT MODE

Enter 2064 as a name at the bike selection screen in extreme contest mode.

SPIRALING SCREEN

Enter SPIRAL as a name at the bike selection screen in extreme contest mode. Enter this code again to return to normal mode.

OVERHEAD VIEW

Enter SPYEE as a name at the bike selection screen in extreme contest mode. Enter this code again to return to normal mode.

MISPLACE MODE

Enter MISPLACE as a name at the bike selection screen in extreme contest mode. Enter this code again to return to normal mode.

TURBO MODE

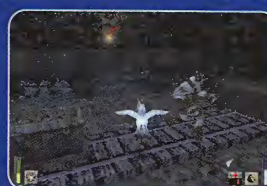
Enter XXX as a name at the bike selection screen in extreme contest mode. Enter this code again to return to normal mode.

UNLIMITED LASERS AND SHIELDS

Enter XCHARGE as a name at the bike selection screen in extreme contest mode. Enter this code again to return to normal mode.

WIREFRAME GRAPHICS

Enter LINEAR as a name at the bike selection screen in extreme contest mode.



Heretic 2



NINTENDO 64

**FISH-EYE**

Pause the game and press C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right

ENEMY BALL

Pause, then press C-Left, C-Down, C-Up, C-Right, C-Left, C-Left, C-Down, C-Down during game

MAD GARIBS

Pause, press C-Down, C-Right, C-Down, C-Up, C-Left, C-Down, C-Left, C-Up

Glover**FIRST PERSON VIEW**

Press Square + Triangle + Start. Game play will be paused. Press Start to resume game play with the new camera angle. For the Japanese version, use Select in place of Start.

EXTRA LOCK-ONS

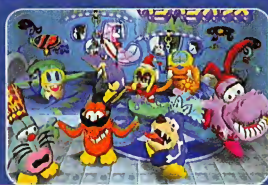
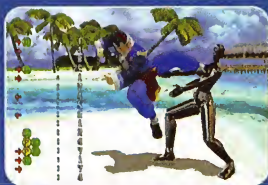
Equip your core with the laser sword and missiles. Begin a game and approach an enemy from a safe distance. Draw the sword and press Up, Down, R1, L1 to gain an extra lock on.

FIXED CAMERA VIEW

Press Circle + X + Start. Game play will be paused. Press Start to resume game play with the camera fixed at the present location. Again, use Select in place of Start for Japanese versions.



PlayStation

**Armored Core2:
Project Phantasma****Virtua Fighter 3 TB/
PenPen Tricelon****King of Fighters:
Round-1****STAGE SELECT**

Complete the game once and go to the options screen.

CLASSIC KYO

Highlight Kyo at the character select screen and press Option to play as the King of Fighters '94 version - shrunken, of course.

FIGHT AS BOSSES

Finish the game using four full teams, one edit team with Shingo, or one edit team with Leona. One of the six Orochi Bosses will become available each time the game is completed.



For all those lucky Dreamcast owners out there, here is the first batch of codes for Sega's 128-bit console.

FIGHT AGAINST ALPHABET CHARACTER

Highlight Akira on the character selection screen and press Start. Then, highlight Lau and press Start. Finally, highlight Pai, hold Start and press A.

FIGHT AS ALPHABET CHARACTER

Highlight Akira on the character selection screen and press Start. Then, highlight Lion and press Start. Finally, highlight Pai, hold Start and press A.

FIGHT AS SILVER DURAL

Press Start + X + A at the character selection screen in training mode.

FIGHT AS GOLD DURAL

Press Start + Y + A at the character selection screen in training mode.

PLAY ON DIFFERENT STAGES

While on stage select in training mode, hold down Start and either X+A or Y+A to select different stage motifs.

PLAY AS HANAMIZU CHARACTER

Simply play through each course, winning silver medals by placing first on all five course variations. Now, Hanamizu (literally, Water Nose) should be available on the character select screen.

OPEN UP ALL COSTUMES

Once you've earned silver medals, go back and play through each course again, earning gold medals this time around. All accessories will be available.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY **Rated R**

Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment Video & DVD • Feb 2

Once in awhile a surprising hit comes along, a movie whose true enjoyment factor is spread by word of mouth, and the strangely titled *There's Something About Mary* is definitely one of those. This hysterical romp follows a girl, not surprisingly named Mary (Cameron Diaz), who seems to have a strange hold over men, making almost all of them fall in love with her – to the point of ridiculous obsession. Nerdy Ted (Ben Stiller) is the key character who has a major crush on Mary at high school. Thirteen years later he still yearns for her, so he uses a sleazy private detective (Matt Dillon) to track her down. Unfortunately for Ted, the detective also falls in love with Mary and a hilarious trail of misunderstanding follows. A word of warning: prepare yourself for some serious grossing out, and some parts may even make your eyes water! The only downside to the movie is the overt mockery of disabled people, which didn't go down well when it was released, but if you can forgive that one somewhat major blunder, the rest should have you writhing with laughter, even the second time around.



WHO AM I?

Columbia Tri-Star Home Video

Rated PG-13
Video & DVD • Feb

Someone you wouldn't think would have an identity crisis is Jackie Chan, but in this latest release he has – and it just may save his life. Chan is a CIA recruit who joins a team of super commandos who raid a secret weapons laboratory deep in the African jungle. During the raid, they find a material with the power of an atomic bomb, but the leader is a traitor who kills members of the team and escapes. Jackie, of course, is not killed at this point, but escapes and is rescued by a native jungle tribe. They nurse him back to health, except that he is left with major amnesia and it's not long before Jackie realizes he must go and search for his true identity. His journey leads him straight back into a web of deceit and betrayal, and eventually back to the CIA, where he learns to distrust everyone and continually watch his back. But hey, this is Jackie Chan – one swift kick in the right area and all his problems are solved! OK, so this has already been on TV, but it's still worth owning for Chan fans.



SIX STRING SAMURAI

MANGA/PALM PICTURES

Manga/Palm Pictures gets set to release some Live Action Movies on DVD and video. In *Six String Samurai*, Buddy is a futuristic hero with a tattered umbrella who must get to Lost Vegas in order to become the next King of Rock & Roll. Wielding a samurai sword in addition to a guitar should make the fight through this post-apocalyptic world a bit easier for the wannabe Elvis. Buddy is joined by an orphan who he saves during a battle, and they cross the wastelands together to get to the place where Buddy can fill those blue suede shoes. OK, so the story sounds completely bizarre, but *Six String Samurai* did win both the cinematography and editing awards at the 1998 Slamdance Film Festival, and if you watch this beautifully shot movie, you'll see it's worthy of these prizes. Arty, weird and definitely "out there," but if you like your movies a bit offbeat, then get ahold of *Six String Samurai*.

Rated PG-13 – On Video and DVD February 23



CHOKO

MANGA/PALM PICTURES

Choke follows the story of Rickson Gracie, a 400-time undefeated fighting champion who has never even taken a hit to the face. This is no ordinary martial arts movie, but it's more of a documentary about freestyle fighting, which is growing fast in Japan and the U.S. The fight will only end if one of the players is knocked out and there's no looking to the ref for sympathy or help – you can either quit or hit the floor. Your opponent can even choke you if he wants, and that's where the movie gets its name. *Choke* follows the build-up to the big championships and follows Gracie's opponents. A well-put-together documentary and interesting stuff, whether you're into fighting or not.

Not Rated – On Video February 23



METALHEADZ

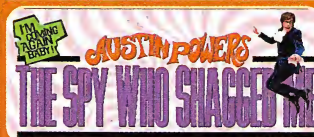
MANGA/PALM PICTURES

And, finally, MTV and clubbing fans can get their video kicks from *The Metalheadz Documentary*, an insight into the UK's club scene as seen through the people who create it – the artists. *Metalheadz* is a drum and bass record label and the documentary features all of the Metalheadz artists, including Goldie and Doc Scott. The DJs interviewed discuss the label, the diverse music scene and the global phenomenon they have created, and take you into the studio and onto the dance floor. A word of warning for the non-Brits out there: some of the London accents are so thick, you may need a translator!

Not Rated – On Video March 16



BUTTING ROOM FLOOR?



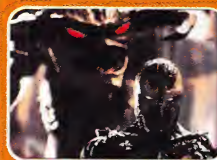
AUSTIN POWERS 2

More releases for 1999: Woody and co. return for *Toy Story 2* – this time it's Woody (who is now a highly collectable item) who needs rescuing when he gets kidnapped. • The fourth *Batman* movie, *Batman: Dark Knight*. Don't

know yet who'll be playing the winged-one, but the story is rumored to be about a confrontation with the Scarecrow (move over Dorothy) who has created a "fear toxin." • More comic-book action hits as the X-Men make their silver-screen debut in *X-Men: The Movie*: Dr. Charles Xavier gathers all the special children with the X-Factor genes together to make an evil-bashing team. • Just to make you horny baby, super agent Austin Powers (complete with new shiny teeth) will return to take on Dr. Evil once more in *Austin Powers 2: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. • Looking way into the future, the year 2000 has some seriously good stuff lined up; don't know who'll play her yet, but Lara Croft finally makes it to the big screen in *Tomb Raider*. • The dinosaurs are back and this time they're on the mainland in *Jurassic Park 3*, and Will Smith and the aliens are back in *Men In Black 2*. • *Spider-Man* also hits the big screen and it's rumored that Ben Affleck will play the part of the web-slinging superhero. • Jonathan Frakes takes a break from *Star Trek* to direct *Total Recall 2*, following Quaid's further adventures on Mars, and *Superman Reborn* follows the man of steel dying and coming back to life. • And there's going to be some *Resident Evil* taking place next year as the



TOMB RAIDER



SPAWN

movie finally arrives – lots of mutations and killings just like the game! • Speaking of mutations, *Spawn* makes a reappearance in the sequel, *Spawn II*. • Last, but not least, those wobbly-headed heroes Thunderbirds are back in *Thunderbirds 2000*. Of course, lots more news on these movies and more as we get it.



By Angela Harrod



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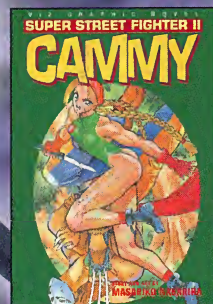
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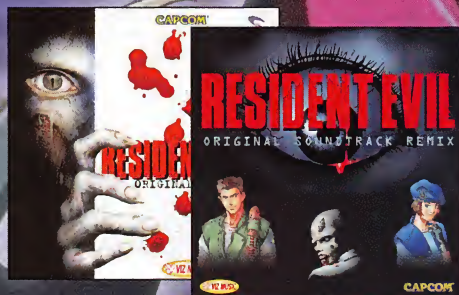
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Following his recent release, *Triptycal*, Ben Neill takes the "mutantrumpet" drum & bass electro sound to new levels with *Goldbug*. I tend to enjoy an artist who manipulates an amalgamation of different electronic sounds on the same album, such as the innovative Q-Burns and (to a lesser extent) a brilliant madman like Wagon Christ. And while Ben Neill's sounds aren't as organic and refined as the aforementioned Astralwerks label mates, he cleverly attacks d&b while swooping in and out of big beat electro – all the while filling the range with his mutantrumpet. Witness "Tunnel Vision," the album's definitive big track. This is a lush, intelligent excursion through new-school (I won't say hard-step) d&b, flanked by gorgeous analog textures and frantic drum programming. Kelli Sae supplies the subtle vocals, while Neill's mutantrumpet hooks the track together deliciously. Not every track is as powerful. There are good moments, such as the mellow mutantrumpet on "Looking Last," and the eclectic chanting and (you guessed it) mutantrumpet on the title track, but Ben is a little simplistic on drums much of the time. Sadly, the Spring Heel Jack, X-Ecutioners, and DJ Krust remixes of "Tunnel Vision" at the tail end of the CD are actually inferior to Ben's own!

Ben Neill
Goldbug
Antilles, Domestic

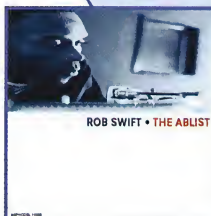
MIKE GRIFFIN

B-

NYC... the mecca of hip-hop. The birthplace of MC-ing and DJ-ing and all that is good. And without a doubt, the New York super-group of turntablists known as the X-Men/X-ecutioners hold the title as the best on the east coast in the art of turntable artistry (as the Pkiz hold claim to the west coast title). X-member Rob Swift, 1992 East Coast DMC turntable winner, has released an album that defines both what the X-Men represent and, on a larger scale, the scope of hip-hop/turntablism today. With deft precision in manipulating rhythm and tempo, Swift scratches, beat-juggles and cuts in an extraordinary narrative fashion that is only comparable to a jazz composer (often reminding one of DJ Premier's production style: minimal, yet jazzy). Swift even takes hold of the mic and shows some lyrical skill on the very catchy track "I'm Leaving." *The Ablist* is an album in which Swift hopes to "influence today's musical generation in much the same way 'Rockit' (Herbie Hancock) influenced me." And if tracks like "Fusion Beats" and "What Would You Do" are any indicator, Rob Swift will probably become a household name to all the heads on both coasts.

Rob Swift
The Ablist
Asphodel, Domestic

GREGORY HAN

A-

ROB SWIFT • THE ABLIST

STAR OCEAN
THE SECOND STORY
ARRANGE ALBUM

Star Ocean
Arrange Game Soundtrack
First Smile, Japanese Import

B+

Gamers' Re(public) Music Reviews

Ask any true video game soundtrack collector who his favorite composers are, and there's a very good chance you'll hear the name Kouichi Sugiyama listed in the mix. This elderly genius, who's touched numerous soundtracks for many game companies, is best known for his Enix work – most notably for composing all the music for the *Dragon Quest* (*Dragon Warrior*) series. His style, especially obvious in the countless *DQ* arrangement albums, is instantly recognizable with its untouched fluidity and simplistic power. *Dragon Quest Monsters: Terry's Wonderland* continues this trend, and although the music was originally composed for the Game Boy, the included arranged pieces are instant classics. The 32 tracks found on this album, 15 are arranged. Of those, six are favorite arrangements from the six previous *DQ* games respectively. What is left, though, is incredible. Track four ("Never Ending Journey"), for example, consists of a minor selection of instruments strung together with a relatively simple composition, but doesn't fail to sweep you into the feeling of newfound adventure. Overall, this soundtrack is perfect for both the Sugiyama fan, and fans of classic game music in general.

RYAN LOCKHART

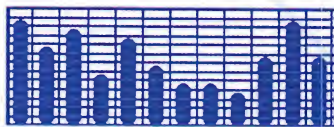
Dragon Quest Monsters
original/Arrange Soundtrack
Sony Records, Japanese Import

A

The original *Star Ocean*, while arriving too late to make that large of an impact on the Super Famicom, certainly had a lot going for it. The graphics were amazing, the quest was long and fulfilling, but it's greatest asset had to be the music. Brilliantly composed by Motoi Sakuaba, each track swelled with power and purpose, making its music album one of my long standing favorites. When *Star Ocean: The Second Story* was announced, the first thing that came to mind was the music potential, and I certainly wasn't disappointed when the game finally arrived. Delivered by the same composer as the original, the new tracks were a joy to listen to, and I anxiously awaited the obligatory soundtrack. Strangely enough, the preliminary *Star Ocean: SS* album wasn't quite what I was expecting, but the fact that an arranged release came out before the original soundtrack is fine with me. Based purely on the fact that it's an arrangement, this new CD is excellent. From "Sacred Song," with its sweeping harp/slow techno background beat to the strong piano riffs of "Resolution ~ Pure a Stream" (don't ask), nearly every song radiates with a strong sense of composition, creating a perfect companion for those who enjoyed the game.

RYAN LOCKHART

Star Ocean
Arrange Game Soundtrack
First Smile, Japanese Import

B+

Wachenröder has an excellent RPG soundtrack. The game isn't an excellent RPG. Why does this happen? Well, regardless, you should probably pick up this soundtrack if you enjoy quality Japanese RPG music. With two nice Ian McDonald tracks and a bunch of cool incidental stuff from the game, Wachenröder's music is very, very good. Interesting use of symphonic sound coupled with electric strings of all sorts equates to a unique aural experience. Of course, it's not the type of soundtrack you'd listen to in your car, but then again, not many RPG soundtracks are. After hearing this soundtrack again, I do wish the game was better... ♪



Wachenröder
Original Game Soundtrack
Marvelous Entertainment

B

Relive the adrenaline rush of this year's frenetic and supremely addictive 60-fps racer from the masters at Nintendo. By no means subtle, this CD is one of short, speedy songs consisting mainly of blaring guitars and speedy drums, poured over slick, synthesized melodies. Twenty-nine selections in all, this original soundtrack includes in-game overtures (complete with engine sounds and commentary) from "Mute City," "Silence," "Devils Forest," "Port Town 1," "Red Canyon," "Big Blue 2," "White Land," and "Fire Field," along with 20 other in-game selections. Listening to *F-Zero* without the visual stimuli of playing it, I'm amazed at the level of quality they achieved given the constraints of the cartridge format. A must have for *F-Zero* fans the world over. ⚡



F-Zero X
Original Sound Track
Nintendo Sound Series

B+

This lithium-induced selection of happy songs not only conjures up moments of Sega glory but is so upbeat that if this can't cheer you up, it's time to tie the noose – you're way beyond help. The compilation starts out with a remix of "Dreams Dreams" from *Nights*, (the kids version). You remember it well, I'm sure.... Sing it with me now! "In the night dream delight..." Had enough? No? Well, try this on for size. Remember *Sonic R*? "Can you feel the sunshine, does it brighten up your day, don't you feel that sometimes you just need to run away?" Still a little down? Hey! Don't you "Believe in Yourself," yourself? Oh yes, from the original (ahem) *Sonic CD*, it's "Cosmic Eternity/Believe in Yourself." Get this CD and be happy! Shuba-da-buya! ⚡



SonicTeam "PowerPlay"
Sega Enterprises LTD.

B

GAMERS' REPUBLIC
MUSIC TOP 5



DAVE HALVERSON'S
TOP PICKS

1. Seal - Human Being

More music to live by from the master of music for the spirit. A Nintendo gamer, Seal is at the top of his game on this wholly spectacular CD.

2. Alanis Morissette - Supposed Infatuation Junkie

Alanis breaks from commercial bonds to produce an intelligent CD that I initially disliked... Always a good thing, it grew on me big time.

3. Rush - Different Stages Live

Three CDs, two from their most recent live show and one classic performance from '78. In lieu of a new Rush, here's the next best thing.

4. Black Sabbath Reunion

The original members sound as though they have transcended time. A drug-free Ozzy wales.

5. Korn - Follow the Leader



MIKE GRIFFIN'S
TOP PICKS

1. Amon Tobin - Permutation

Amazing Jazz-infused drum & bass and big band hybrid from the Ninja Tune stable. Gorgeous string samples, complex construction. So cool!

2. The Timewriter - Jigsaw Pieces

This is really intelligent house. Track after track of warm, synthy layers and infectious basslines.

3. Wagon Christ - Tally Ho!

Luke Vibert goes crazy again, but this time it sounds like he's having a lot of fun. Have you seen the "We're So Lovely" video yet? Ha!

4. U.F.OFF - Best of The Orb

An absolute required purchase if you are a fan of The Orb. Sumptuous classics retold.

5. Q-Burns - Feng Shui

The Burns spreads the Abstract Message on his first full-length down-tempo album.



GREGORY HAN'S
TOP PICKS

1. Q-Bert - Demolition Pumpkin Squeeze Musik

SF's premiere turntablist and member of the Invisibl Skratch Piklz represents to the fullest.

2. Deeper Shades of Hooj - Volume 2

A surprise find that has become a house/trance favorite among the designers at GR.

3. The K&D Sessions-Kruder & Dorfmeister

The dynamic duo provides for those in need of consummate down-tempo acid jazz beats.

4. Fatboy Slim - On The Floor At The Boutique

Norman Cook propels this import release into a big-beat frenzy at his own club, the Big Beat Boutique. Got me outta my head, indeed.

5. A Tribe Called Quest @ House of Blues LA

Last Tribe tour with Black Star and J-Rocc & DJ Curse from the Beat Junkies? Enuff said!



From Toycom Inc., this marks the first notable modern-day anime to action figure adaptation! And who better to display than Lt. Kusanagi from *Ghost in the Shell*. Pictured far left is the first statue, which stands 9 1/2" tall and comes fully painted (retail \$129.99), due to hit in January. Below (in white) is the 6" action figure, and at right, statue number two (coming soon)!



[GHOST IN THE SHELL] 

GHOST IN THE SHELL



METAL GEAR SOLID

Not six months ago we were discussing how great it would be if Todd McFarlane were to immortalize our favorite *Metal Gear Solid* characters with a set of action figures. It seems Todd knows a good thing when he plays one (he had us send over a dozen *MGS* official strategy guides for his troops), and has done just that! Based on Konami's No. 1 selling PlayStation game, McFarlane Toys is making ready eight figures from the game. Packed with accessories from night-vision goggles to laser-sighting devices and an arsenal of weapons, the *Metal Gear Solid* toy line includes: Solid Snake, Liquid Snake, Meryl Silverburgh, Vulcan Raven, Revolver Ocelot, Sniper

Wolf, Ninja, and Psycho Mantis. These awesome figures should be hitting stores this February/March. For more information on availability in your area, you may want to contact your local Babbages etc. (they now stock a full line of the hottest action figures at most of their locations) or check out the McFarlane web site at www.mcfarlanetoys.com.

If you'd like a shot at winning the entire set absolutely free, check us out here at GR Synthetics next month, when we'll begin our McFarlane Toys promotion and give away 25 full sets, along with some other cool stuff!



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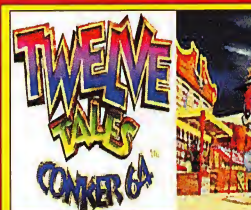


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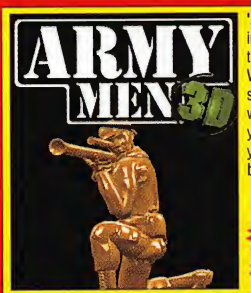
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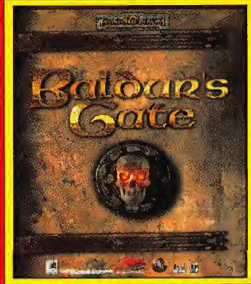
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Todd McFarlane interview
continued from page 14

How much did you have to do with, and what did you think of, the *Spawn* video game?

You mean the one for the Playstation? Again, I'm not a video game guy, and my knowledge there is somewhat limited, but I asked a lot of questions up front and helped with the designing of it and the creation of some of the storyline and whatever else. But then again, I didn't have a wide enough breadth of looking at a lot of other product to know that the final execution could have been pushed in one direction or the other. Up until I became the boss of animation, it was like, what do I know about animation? But it was a very quick learning process, right? But just like the publishing and the toys, I just sort of throw myself into it and just figure it out, and I believe that when you look at the beginning of what I did within those fields and where I'm at two years later, you can see a marked improvement. I believe that video game technology is the same way—until I actually dive-bomb in myself, and say I'm going to develop something myself, or I want to work shoulder to shoulder in a partnership directly with somebody, it's tough to problem-solve the way that's conducive to what I personally want out of a game. So within those confines I think that everybody did the best that they could. Sometimes when you're doing stuff in-house, one of two things can happen: you get the best guys in the fleet doing it, or they're working on another game that's actually making a lot more money for people, in which case sometimes you're actually better off to go out of house. So not being the guy who knows about games, there are kinks just like in any game, but overall, I thought it came out okay.

Do you have any plans for future games?

Well, right now, we're getting busy with music and stuff like that: we're in the beginning stages of directing a music video for Korn. I've got other things that are occupying my time. I'm guessing that, given that I'm curious about a lot of things, eventually I'll stick my head into some kind of developing somewhere down the line.

Yeah, there are so many things to get involved with, and only so many hours in the day.

Yeah, with games it's been like I'm just hanging on; it's been something that I've become afraid of. Once I saw the first *Pong* game, I just ran, and I've been running ever since. It's like I've got to run faster because the technology is growing pretty quick. I've never played games and now, as an adult, I don't have the dexterity for it. I've tried it, and it's kind of like trying to learn a foreign language. I should have done it when I was eight, right? I would have been more fluent in it, and now it's like, I'm an idiot. And as you get older, as adults, we're not inclined to look like idiots. So I can either spend hours getting good at this and look like an idiot the whole time, frustrating myself, or I can just go do something I'm good at and not look like a dork, so vanity comes into it. You say, "I don't feel like being a dork." So technology makes me look like a dork, a little bit.

You've mentioned in previous interviews how you're building your company on four pillars.

That'd be publishing, which we were already in, TV, movies, and toys, with electronics kind of augmenting all four of those. We've planted all four of these pillars, and it's just a matter of how big we're going to make them, and how they can effect one another. Then, once you're in one of the divisions, how does something like music come into play? It's like, "I've got access to these cool bands, so they can do a cool soundtrack for my movie," or "I've got access to these guys, maybe I can make a cool toy out of them." Once you put the pillars down, you can take almost any subject matter and ask, "How does this fit any one pillar?" Some of these are just a single fit, like a comic book that doesn't translate to any of the other mediums, and some of them are multi-dimensional that you can do something more with. So it's a matter of being smart about the different ideas and opportunities that are in front of you, and from them you can build the pillars of a pretty fancy house.

So far, so good.

Yeah, so far. As the days go by, it's your momentum that gives you a safety valve against a down market. If you've diversified in three or four different areas, you're okay if one or even two of them takes a downturn, because you've still got the other areas. This also holds true within the confines of the toy company, where we do in-house products, we do *Spawn* products, we do music products, we do outsourcing products, we do *X-Files*, we do monster stuff like Freddy Kruger, and then you say, "O.k., well, let's try electronics." Put that into the equation, and it's like, "cool." The diversification is big, but then within each of those pillars, you have to diversify, so that you can keep yourself bulletproof from up and down markets.

Tell us about working with HBO on *Spawn: the Animated Series*.

To me, that's a continual evolution. We've got another six episodes coming out in April, and I believe we keep getting a little better than the last ones. Animation is kind of like what's happened with comics and toys, in that the more efficient you become at it, the better you become at problem solving. Was I satisfied with the first stuff? Yeah, because it was as good as we could do at the time. I believe that we've added better elements to it over time that, to the naked eye, you couldn't quantify, but in terms of on a technical side, we've smoothed the hiccups in the process and we've made the overall package more impressive as time goes by.

How big a role do you play in the production of the animated series?

Well, in Hollywood, the boss is the executive producer. Ultimately, the role that I play is that if you like our show, then that's my show. Does that mean that out of the thousands of decisions, I made every single one? No, because it takes so many people to make movies and films, that'd be impossible, but what the executive producer does in this case is to point everybody in the right direction, gives the attitude and the atmosphere, and in this case, since I created *Spawn*, gives the whole story background, says "This is what I want," and then hopes that his people go out and bring that back. If they bring it back, then God bless them, and if they don't then we have to discuss it and keep kicking the can, which is what we continue to do, so we can make this a little bit better and that a little bit better. Did we want to do a dark, moody, adult action-oriented cartoon to start with? Yes, but I wanted to evolve it to where it's now going to be this cool atmospheric drama and get away from the suspense, because you can really only shoot your gun so many times before it becomes boring. All of that comes from high on up, but again, in anything that involves a lot of people, you're only as good as the peo-

ple you surround yourself with. So when things happen good, I get a lot of praise, and when things happen bad, they have a tendency to blame others. It's a good position to be in, when lots of people do lots of good work, and make you look good if they do their job right.

Do you have any plans for a manga-inspired *Spawn*?

I would say that I have plans for kind of manga-ish stuff, and would say yes to that question if you subtract *Spawn* out of it; basically a McFarlane-style japanimation that might not necessarily include *Spawn*, but it still takes all those influences of stuff that I like. But again, we're looking at doing a 90-minute *Spawn* feature animation, so that would be very heavily Japanese-influenced in terms of the style, but it won't be like manga, and it won't be like my toys per se. Whenever I get involved in different aspects of different styles, you don't necessarily have to keep the same key components, right?

What anime title do you enjoy?

Well, you start at the top and you work your way down. People will know stuff like *Akira*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and successes like *Princess Minoka*, but these are high-water marks. Sometimes you get spoiled, since you see the good stuff and then you start to go down, but I believe that almost any decent-budgeted Japanese animation has at least a couple of moments that are breathtaking. Everyone has something that they do right at some point in the movie where you say, "We need to be doing more of that." But the difference between these is the budgets; I mean, it's like talking about Saturday morning cartoons versus a Disney flick, and they've had four years to do it. The better titles sustain a level of quality for the entire length of the film, instead of going in fits and starts.

I know there's a new *Spawn* movie coming out. Do you have a larger budget for that?

The weird thing is, depending on casting, I see it having a smaller budget, because a lot of the money that was spent on the first one was special effects, and with the story that I'm planning on telling in the sequel, there's no place for special effects, or very minimal at best. So it's graduating from a PG-13 action movie to an R-rated suspense/drama. If you put the two movies together, there's going to be very few similarities, other than the basic thing called "Spawn" in them.

Will John Leguizamo return as the Violator?

No. My intent is to take the fantasy element out of the sequel, and have it more talked about, so in other words, when you talk about fire and brimstone and heaven and hell and the end of the earth, it's more like the same way they talked about it in *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*.

So you're really more interested in advancing the storyline, as opposed to replaying what we've already seen in the movie and read in the comics?

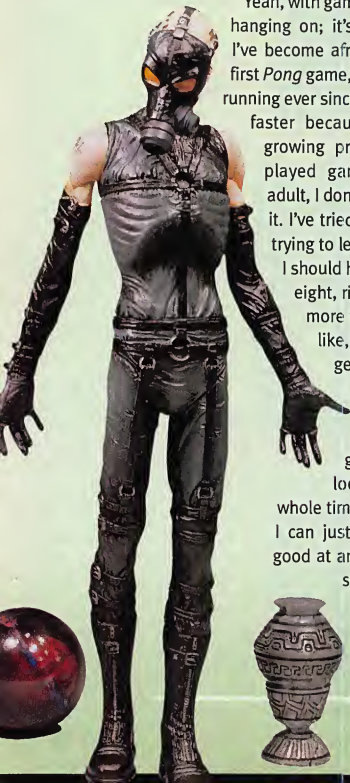
Yeah, wipe the slate clean and say: "Those of you who liked the first movie might be disappointed. Those of you who didn't see the first movie, well, I'm taking another angle at it. Those of you who don't know who *Spawn* is, you're coming in with a clean slate."

What was the final earnings tally on the *Spawn* movie, including video and foreign?

Box office worldwide, it did about \$85 million, and I have to believe worldwide it did at least another \$20 million on video and ancillary rights like cable, satellite, reruns and broadcast. So it's easily over \$100 million.

Congratulations on your successes, Todd, and thanks for your time. We're looking forward to seeing your future projects!

Thanks a lot!



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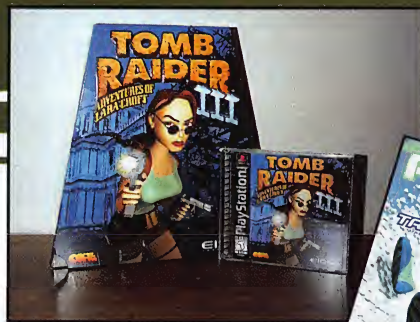
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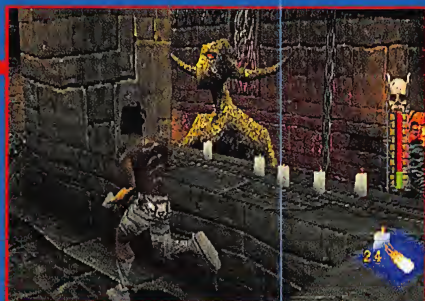
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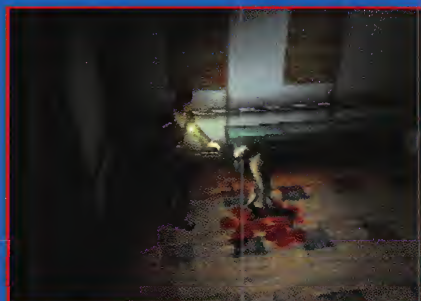
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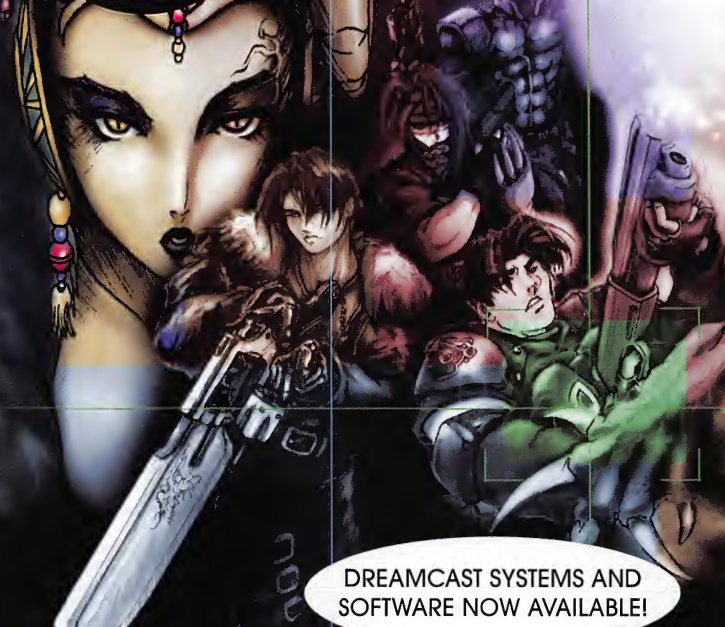
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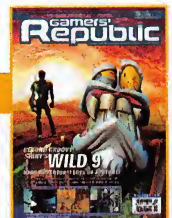
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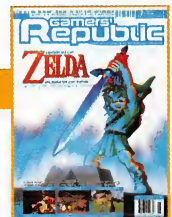
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page 111

coming next month

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SONIC ADVENTURE

The game that will complete our Dreamcast December, *Sonic Adventure*, is still slated for release on December 23 as we close this issue. Should the game slip (rumors of such a horrible event are circulating), ignore the picture to the left and imagine it's of, like, *Rayman 2* or something. If Sonic does show up, this will surely be a Christmas to remember for those bold enough (and rich enough) to have purchased an import Dreamcast. Either way, expect the full scoop in next month's issue. Also helping us usher in 1999 are long-awaited reviews of *Turok 2* and *Rogue Squadron* – two Nintendo 64 games that (Ram) Pak that extra punch – along with *Starshot*, Infogrames' promising new Nintendo 64 platform/adventure. For the PlayStation, look for *Xena* (based on the popular WB series), *Contender* (989's auspicious new boxing game), *Street Fighter Zero 3*, an all-new *Goemon* adventure, Atlus/Red's *Thousand Arms*, and Square's latest fighting sensation, *Ehrgeiz*.

That plus all the latest Dreamcast news and previews, along with the usual dose of interviews and feature stories should make March a month to remember!

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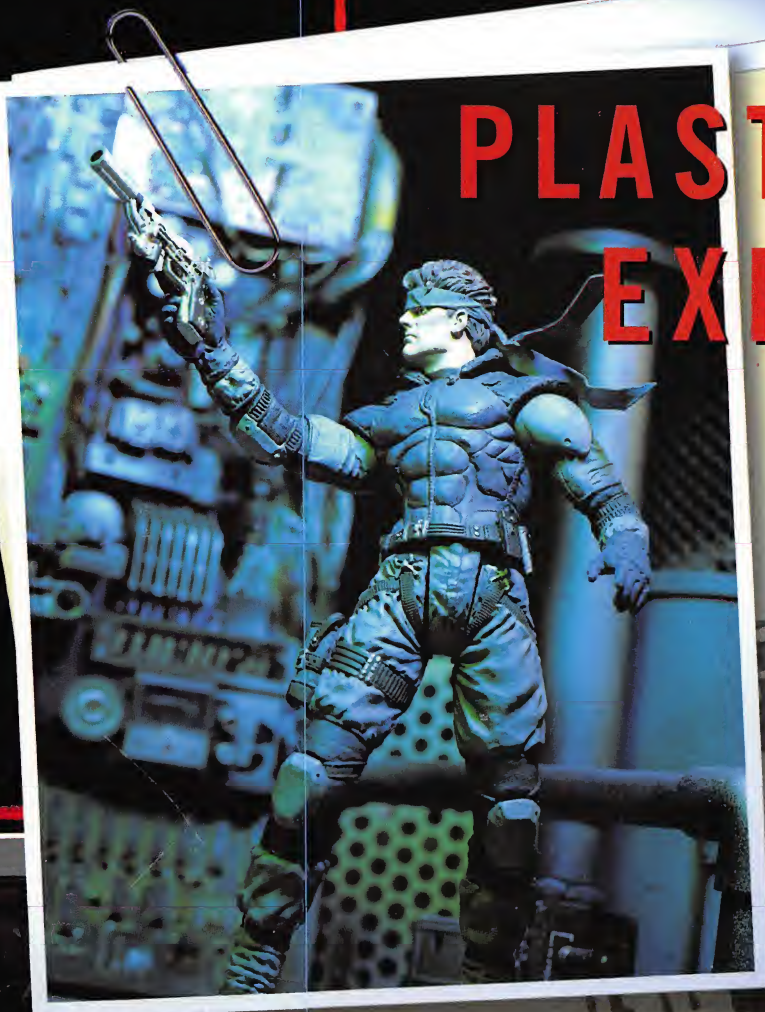


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